THE Hudson REVIEW

HAYDEN CARRUTH:
The Question of Poetic Form

JAMES BAKER HALL:
Hands—a story

MARVIN MUDRICK:
Pushkin in English

WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD:
The Hermeneutical Mafia

ROBERT NYE:
59^{x}: A True Tale

Poems by JOYCE CAROL OATES, THEODORE WEISS, NANCY CARDOZO, C. G. HANZLICEK, JAMES WRIGHT, HERBERT MORRIS, PHILIP MURRAY, SAMUEL HAZO.

Articles and Reviews by VERNON YOUNG, ROGER SALE, DONALD E. STANFORD, BRUCE ALLEN, CHARLES W. MILLARD, MARCIA B. SIEGEL.

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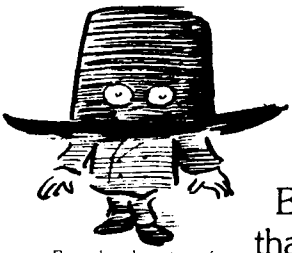

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THE Hudson Review

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NANCY CARDOZO's selected poems, *Helmet of the Wind*, was published by Bobbs-Merrill (1972).

JAMES BAKER HALL* is working on a novel and has published several stories and poems in various magazines. A selection of his poems will appear in an early issue of this Review. Mr. Hall lives in Lexington, Kentucky.

JOYCE CAROL OATES' latest novel is *The Assassins: A Book of Hours*, and her newest book of poems is *The Fabulous Beasts* (some poems of which have appeared in previous issues of this Review). Ms. Oates is also an associate editor of a new journal, *The Ontario Review*.

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JAMES WRIGHT's most recent volume of poetry is *Two Citizens* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1973).

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(Continued on page 566)

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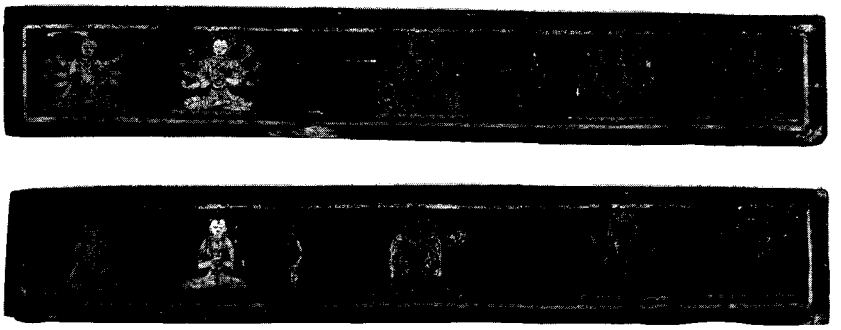

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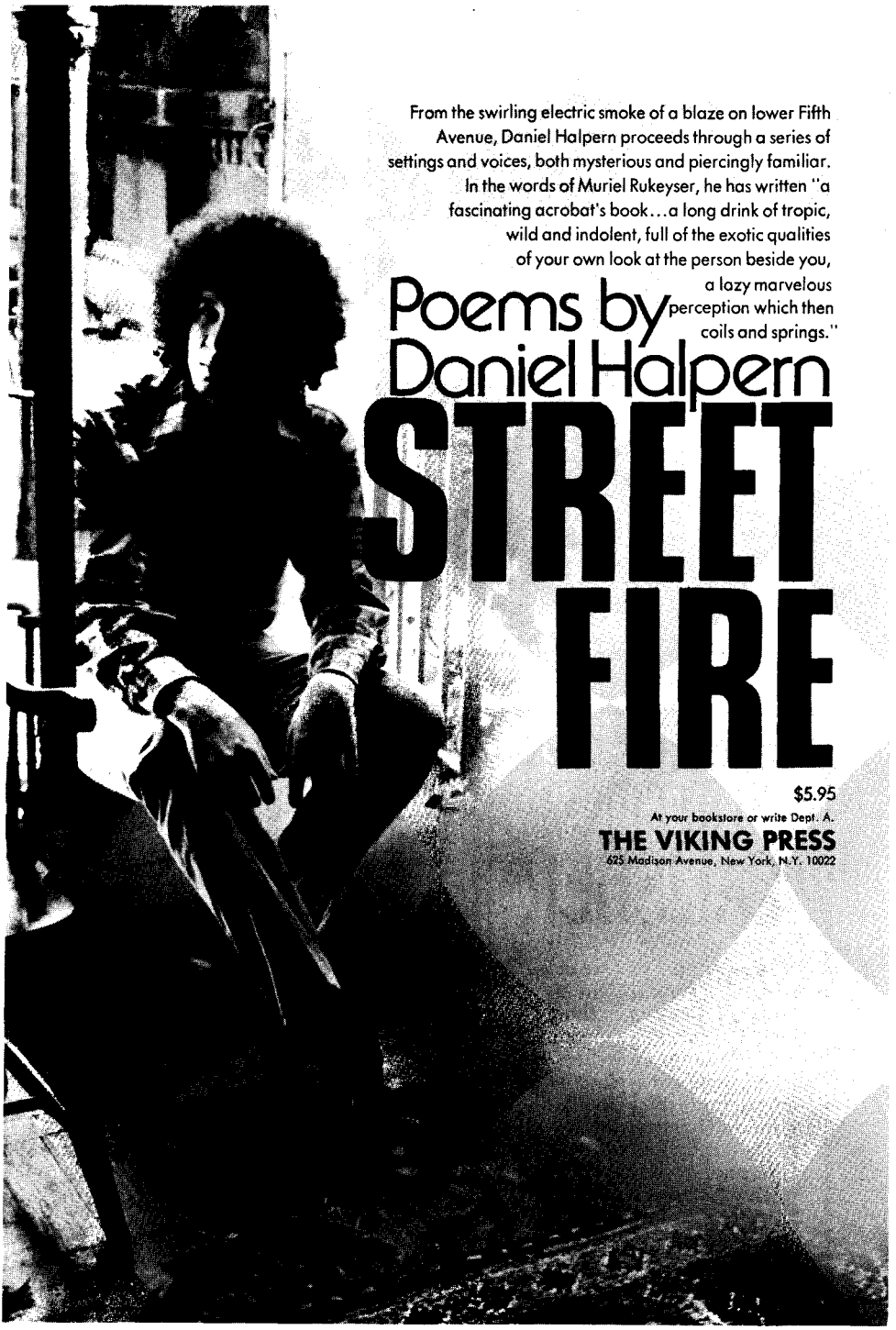

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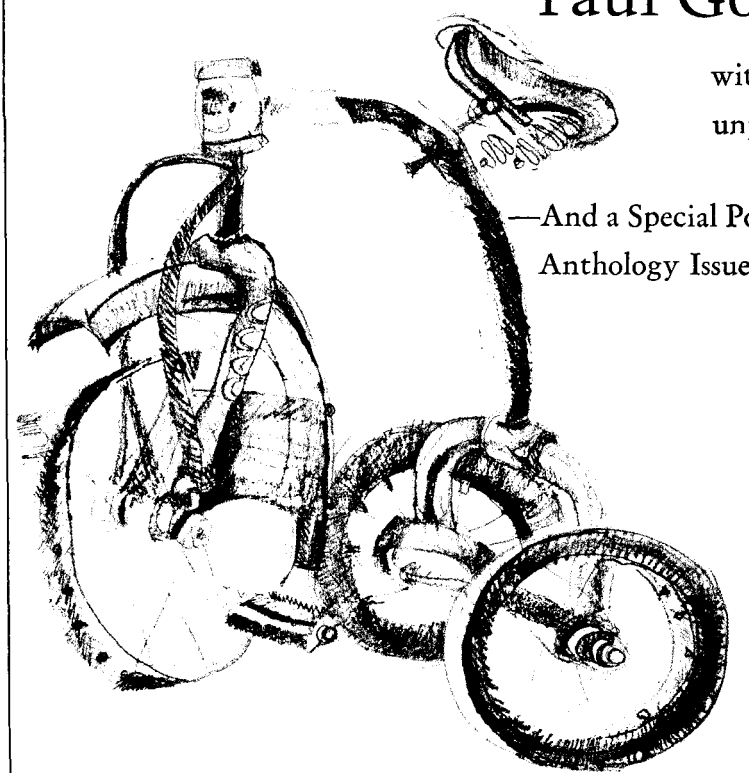

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I NEVER TIRE OF TELLING

I never tire of telling my trainer,
throw in the sponge,
but he doesn't hear me
for he has never been seen in the ring
or even outside it.
Perhaps in his way he tries
to save me from dishonour,
and maybe he takes such care of me,
idiot or buffoon that I am,
that he holds me in balance between rage
and gratitude.

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Selected Poems (1966)
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NEW DIRECTIONS

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HAYDEN CARRUTH

The Question of Poetic Form

. . . 151. Sometimes when manufacturers go into business for the first time they give their products high model numbers, as if to suggest that they are old companies with long experience in similar antecedent productions. Well, in somewhat the same spirit, though I hope for reasons less specious, I begin here with paragraph no. 151. God knows I'm an old company, and perhaps only He knows the number of my antecedent productions. But, more specifically, what I want to suggest by my high model number is the time that has gone into the preparation of this particular product; my years of random "scholarship," my amassed notes, fragments, citations, experimental pages, scattered bibliographies, and so on, with which I sit surrounded now—more than enough, I assure you, to fill up 150 introductory paragraphs. Then rejoice with me, for they are all jettisoned. No footnotes, no quotations, and as few proper names as I can get by with: that is how I have decided to proceed. Let the thing be abstract, subjective, principled. Academic critics and philosophers have their reasons, I know, but their reasons are not mine; nor are they the reader's, at least not if my readers are the people I hope to address, my fellow poets and lovers of poetry.

152. Yet aside from the fact that I would find it personally too disheartening not even to mention my labors, a further point arises from these missing 150 paragraphs. For a long time I shuffled my papers, sorted them, fumbled them, trying to make my notes fall into some pattern that would be useful to me, until at last I saw the truth: there is no pattern. And the reason is clear; I knew it all along, but was intimidated from applying it by the manners of the very scholars whose works I was reading. Virtually every important theory of poetry has been invented by a poet. That is the nub of it. And each theory has sprung from the poet's own emotional and esthetic needs in his particular time and place—or hers, for many important statements have come, especially recently, from women, though I must submit to grammar by masculinizing the métier hereafter—and moreover each theory has been derived from what the poet has observed of his own psychology and method in his own

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workshop. In short, the theories are subjective. Each theorist begins by returning, not to "first principles," since in art they do not exist, but to experience. The scholarship is irrelevant. And no wonder the theories are inconsistent and often in conflict; no wonder there is no pattern and the categories break down, so that the scholars end, as one of them has, by calling Pope a neo-classical romanticist or by using every term in their catalogues, ineffectually, for Ezra Pound. Yet the statements of Pope and Pound and other poets remain crucial, the indispensable documents of our poetic understanding. In them I find both urgency of feeling and the irrefragibility of knowledge, the real knowledge of what happens when a poem is written. Both qualities are what keep art and the artist alive.

153. There is no pattern then; quite the contrary. And consequently what I am doing here above all is asking for . . . but I don't know what to call it. It is neither reconciliation nor toleration. Among genuinely conflicting views reconciliation is impossible, while toleration implies indifference or a kind of petrified Quakerish absolutism of restraint. These are not what I mean at all. Yet it is true that I abhor sectarianism in the arts, or dogmatism of any kind. What I am asking for, I think, is the state of mind that can see and accept and believe ideas in conflict, without ambivalence or a sense of self-divisiveness. Call it eclecticism if you will. I have been accused of it often enough, the word flung out like a curse. But just as I, a radical, distrust other radicals who are not in part conservatives—i.e., who are ideologues—so I distrust poets who cannot perceive the multiplexity of their art, perceive it and relish it. Poetry is where you find it. I am convinced of this; convinced as a matter of temperament, as a matter of thirty years' intensive critical reading, and as a matter of my perception of human reality—the equivalence of lives and hence of values. So if you find poetry in Blake but not in Pope, or the other way around, that's o.k., you are better off than people who find it in neither. But if you find it in both, then you are my kind of reader, my kind of human being.

154. Moreover poetry is a mystery. I don't mean the poem on the page, though that is difficult enough. I mean what went before: poetry as process, poetry as a function of what we call, lumping many things together, the imagination. Think how long science has worked, thus far in vain, to explain the origin of life, which appears to be a simple problem, comparatively speaking, involving few and simple factors. Then think of trying to explain the imagination; first

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the imagination in general, then a particular imagination; the factors are incalculable. I believe it will never be done. Hence what anyone says about poetry, provided it be grounded in knowledge, is as true as what anyone else may say, though the two sayings utterly conflict. Yet they can be held in the mind together, they can be believed together. And still the element of mystery will remain.

155. What about Aristotle? He was no poet; far from it. It shows unquestionably in his theory of poetry. He wrote about art from the point of view not of the artist but of the spectator, the playgoer. He described the psychology of esthetic experience; pity and woe, the notion of catharsis. This is interesting and useful, and from it certain ideas may be extrapolated about the work itself, the play. But about playwriting, about art as process? No. And Aristotle's attempt to do it—the feeble theory of imitation—as well as the attempts of a great many others after him, have produced confusion and irrelevance for nearly 2500 years. To my mind this is the giveaway. A real theory of art begins with process and accepts the inevitability of mystery; it rests content with its own incompleteness. A spurious theory of art begins somewhere else and tries to explain everything.

156. The word that seems to incorporate most fully the essential idea of imaginative process is the word *form*. But at once the element of mystery makes itself known, for the word has been used in so many different ways, with so much looseness and imprecision, that clearly people do not know what it really means; or perhaps the word itself really means more, implicitly or innately, than the people mean, or can mean, when they use it. Hence the imprecision can never be eliminated; the craftiest philosopher will never produce anything but a partial definition. Yet this is no reason for not trying. A few years ago I was attacked by an eminent poet, publicly and bitterly, because in a short piece on another topic I had said that the staggered tercets used by Williams in his later poems are a "form." Granted, I was using the word imprecisely, which is what one must do with these large, complex, mysterious terms, especially in short pieces, if one is to avoid a breakdown of communication. I am sure my readers knew what I meant. But the eminence was not satisfied; apparently he was infuriated. No, he said, the staggered tercets are merely a style; the form is something deeper, the whole incalculable *ensemble* of feelings, tones, connotations, images, and so on that bodies forth the poem; and I purposely, if somewhat

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quaintly, say "bodies forth" rather than "embodies" because I think this exactly conveys my attacker's meaning, and the distinction is worth attending to. Of course he was right. I agree with him; I agreed with him then and before then. But at the same time he was only partly right, and he was being dogmatic in just the sense I have referred to, i.e., by insisting arbitrarily that part of the truth is the whole of the truth, and by pinning everything upon an understanding of terms. This is what dogma is. Yet often enough in the past the meanings of our terms have been exactly reversed. *Form* has meant the poem's outer, observable, imitable, and more or less static materiality; *style* has meant its inner quality, essentially hidden and unanalysable, the properties that bind and move and individuate. Indeed this was the common usage of the two words in literary theory from Lessing and Goethe to T. S. Eliot. And all that is proven by this is that poets are always talking about the same things, but with different names, different tones, different emphases, and different perceptual orientations. How could they otherwise, when each returns to his own experience for the knowledge from which he writes?

157. The danger is, as we have seen, that experience which leads to knowledge will lead further to dogmatism. It happens all the time, by no means more frequently among poets than among others. Yet it isn't necessary. Neither in human nor in categorical terms is this progression inevitable, and it can be interrupted anywhere by reasonableness and humility. What do we mean by the word *form* in ordinary speech? What is the form of an apple? Certainly it is not only the external appearance, its roundness, redness, firmness, etc. Nor is it only the inner atomic structure. Nor is it the mysterious genetic force that creates appleness in the apple. It is all these things and more, the whole apple. The form *is* the apple. We cannot separate them. In philosophical terms it is the entire essence of the apple plus its existence, the fact of its being. I think that when we use the word *form* in reference to a poem we should use it in just this way. It means the whole poem, nothing less. We may speak of outer and inner form, and in fact I think we must, provided we remember that these are relative terms, relative to each other and to the objectives of any particular inquiry. An image, for example, may be an element of outer form at one time or of inner form at another; it depends on how you look at it. But the form *is* the poem.

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158. As for style, to my mind it is not something different from form but something contained within form, a component of form. True, it is unlike other components. But they themselves are more or less unlike one another, so why should this cause difficulty? The best definition I can make is this: style is the property of a poem that expresses the poet's personality. Either his real personality or his invented personality; or, most likely, a combination of the two. It is manifested in the concrete elements of form: syntax, diction, rhythm, characteristic patterns of sound or imagery, and so on; and if one has sufficient patience these elements can be identified, classified, tabulated, they can be put through the whole sequence of analytic techniques; yet style will remain in the end, like the personality behind it (though not on the same scale), practically indemonstrable. Style consists of factors so minutely constituted and so obscurely combined that they simply are not separable and not measurable, except in the grossest ways. Yet we know a style when we see it, we recognize it and are attracted or repelled by it. One reason for this is the fact that style is a continuing element in a poet's work, it remains consistently itself from one poem to another, even though the poems in other respects are notably dissimilar. We speak of the "growth" and "maturity" of a poet's style in the same way that we speak of the growth and maturity of a person. This is an interesting fact; it may even sometimes be a crucial fact, as when we are attempting to explain the incidence of poetic genius. But it can also be a dangerous fact, for it leads to the state of mind in which style seems to be abstract from the poem, abstract from form itself. This is a delusion, I think, and moreover a delusion that brings us near the heart of the question of poetic form.

159. Some people will say that my assertion regarding outer and inner form is sloppy. I don't see why. I am comfortable in my radical relativism, and am frankly unable to explain why other people shouldn't be comfortable in it too. Yet I know what they have in mind. Some kinds of outer form, they will say, are repeatable. Sonnets, villanelles, that sort of thing; and of course it is quite true that the structures of meter and rhyme in some such poems may be indicated roughly but schematically by stress marks and letterings, and then may be imitated in new substances of words, images, feelings, experiences, and so on. My critics will say that this repeatability of certain elements of form makes them absolutely distinct from other elements that cannot be repeated. Again I don't

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see why. To me the poem in its wholeness is what is important, and I do not care for classifications. Besides, absolute classifications are a myth. Simply because we can state that two poems written a hundred years apart are both Petrarchan sonnets, does that make them the same? Obviously not. Moreover the statement itself seems to me to have only the most superficial classificative meaning; it is virtually useless. Oh, I know what immense complexes of cultural value may adhere to the Petrarchan sonnet or to other conventional classes of poetic structure, and how in certain contexts, outside the discussion of form, these values may be most decidedly *not* useless. O.K. But here I *am* discussing form, and the point I want to make is that in reality no element of form is perfectly repeatable and no element is perfectly unique. Outer and inner form may approach these absolutes at either end, but they cannot reach them. They cannot reach them because the absolutes lie outside the poem. A rhyme scheme is not a poem; it is a complete abstraction which has only the absoluteness—if that is the right term—of a Euclidean triangle existing nowhere in nature. Similarly the combination of vital energies and individual referents at the heart of a poem, its inner form, may be almost unique, almost unanalysable or indiscerptible, but it cannot be absolutely so, for then the poem would cease to be a product of human invention and would assume a status equivalent to that of the creaturely inventor himself, a part of *natura naturata*; and that, I believe—I fervently hope—is impossible. (Though I know many poets who claim just this for their own inventions and their own inventive powers.) In short, it is not a question of repeatability but of imitation. And it is not a question of facsimile but of approximation. All we can say about the abstractability of form, including style, is that some elements of form, chiefly the outer, are more or less amenable to imitation, and that other elements, chiefly the inner, are more or less resistant to it. Yet this is saying a good deal. The form *is* the poem, and all its elements lie *within* the poem. Repeatability is a delusion. Finally, even style, though I have noted its continuance from poem to poem, does not continue by means of repetition but by means of self-imitation, that is to say, imperfectly, hence changeably and developmentally; an unchanging style would be a dead style, or no style at all and certainly not a part of poetry.

160. I don't know if what I have written in this last paragraph is clear. Let me reduce it to an analogy. By examining a number of

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apples one can draw up a generalized schematic definition of an apple, and by using modern methods of investigation one can make this definition account not only for the apple's external appearance but for its invisible internal structure and its animate energy, the forces that determine both its specificity and its individuality. Conceivably this definition might be useful, since by referring to it one could recognize another apple when one saw it. Beyond that, if one were inclined to make classifications the definition would help in distinguishing the apple from other classes of fruit. But no one, not even the most ardent lovers of definitions, would say that the definition *is* the apple. Obviously the definition is only a definition. And yet some people say that the definition is the *form* of the apple. Can this be? I don't see how. Can a form exist apart from the thing it forms, or rather apart from the thing that makes it a form, that informs it? Can we have such a thing as an unformed form? No, a definition is only a definition, a generalization, an abstraction; and a form, by virtue of being a form, is concrete. No part of the apple's form can exist outside the apple.

161. When I put the matter in these terms the source of difficulty becomes clear right away, and of course it is the Platonic ideal. Well, it seems to me that Plato made a very shrewd observation of human psychology when he conceived his ideals—if he was the one who actually conceived them (I am ignorant of pre-Socratic philosophy). Unquestionably our imaginations do contain an abstracting faculty, with which we derive and separate ideas from things, and often these ideas become ideals in both the Platonic and modern senses. They are universals, though that is not saying as much as people often mean when they use this word. They are what enable us to be perfectionists, knowing the ideal is unattainable yet striving always toward it; which is what accounts for human excellence, in poetry and in everything else. Every poet has in his head the "idea" of the perfect poem, though it has never been written and never will be. But to infer from this useful but passive quality that ideals—definitions, "forms"—are active or instrumental in the realm of practice, in poetry or in nature, seems to me mere fancy.

162. I should think poets ought to see this more easily than most people. A form is an effect, not a cause. Of course I don't say that in a chain of cultural actions and reactions a form, or rather the abstract definition of a form, may not play a causal role; without doubt it may, and obviously the element of convention in literature

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is large and important. But considered in conceptual purity, a form is not a cause. Do we work from the form toward the poem? That is the mode of the set piece, the classroom exercise—and we know what kind of "poems" come from that. No, we work from the thing always, from the perception or experience of the thing, and we move thence into feelings and ideas and other cultural associations, and finally into language, where by trial and error we seek what will be expressive of the thing. If we are lucky we find it, and only then do we arrive, almost by accident or as an afterthought, at form. In one sense form is a by-product of poetry, though this is not to deny its essentiality. Naturally I do not mean either that the actual complicated processes of poetic imagination can be reduced to any such simple progression as the one I have indicated. The whole transaction may occur in a flash, literally simultaneously. Formal intuitions may appear at the very beginning. I am convinced that no method of analysis will ever be contrived which is refined enough to isolate all the energies and materials combined in the poetic act. Yet at the same time I do suggest that form in itself is never the cause, and certainly never the instrument (the efficient cause), of real poetry, and I believe this is something all real poets can verify from their own experience.

163. Until now my strategy has been to avoid using the two words that in fact have been the crucial terms in all my speculations about poetic form for several years, the words *organic* and *fixed*. Yet they are my reason for these paragraphs, as well as my incitement. The notions I have set down here must have been set down thousands of times before, I'm sure, frequently by writers more skillful and gifted than I. Hence what impels me is my awareness that each age attacks the perennial topics from the standpoint of its particular need, with its peculiar angle of vision and edge of feeling. And our age, speaking in terms of poetry, seems to revolve predominantly around these two terms. "Organic form" *vs.* "fixed form": that indicates how we look at the question of poetic form, and it pretty well suggests the quality of our feeling about it. Certainly we are earnest and combative, we are very acutely caught up. Have poets in earlier times worried themselves quite as much as we do about form in poetry? Even the word itself—*form*—has about it now a flavor of ultimacy, almost a numen, that I don't think it possessed in ages past. Of course there are good reasons for this, at least in terms of literary evolution. Anyone who has lived through the past

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thirty or forty years of poetry in America knows exactly how the conflict between "fixed form" and "organic form" came about, and why. But I am not interested here in the history or sociology of poetry; I am interested in the thing itself, and I hope what I have written so far indicates that I think both terms, *organic* and *fixed,* as they appear in common usage among poets today, are misapplied. Clearly this is the case with fixed form. If form cannot be abstracted it cannot be fixed; at best it can only be turned into a definition, a scheme. The case with organic form seems less clear, because in some sense the concept of organic form is close to what I have been saying about form as the effect or outcome of poetry. But frequently the advocates of organic form go further; they say that the forms of their poems are taken, if not from the ideal forms of Plato's heaven, then from forms in nature, in experience, in the phenomenal world. But forms in the phenomenal world are no more abstractions than any other forms, and transference is impossible. At best poetic form is an analogy to nonesthetic form, but a very, very remote analogy; so remote indeed that I think it serves no purpose, and the citing of it only beclouds the issue. If what I have argued here is true, i.e, that form is the poem, then form is autonomous—it can be nothing else; which is only what poets have said in other ways for centuries. (Though this does not mean, I would insist, that the poem in its totality of feeling, meaning, and value is separable from morality or ordinary human relevance.) Well, if form is autonomous then let us treat it as such.

164. But if form is autonomous it is also indigenous. A particular poetic form is solely *in* a particular poem; it *is* the poem. Hence it inheres solely in the materials of that poem (which by extension or implication may include the poem's origins). From this I conceive that if an analogy exists between a poetic form and a form in nature, this analogy is solely and necessarily a coincidence; and it is meaningless. After all, what true or functional analogy can exist between the forms of generically differing materials? To say that a poetic form is analogous to a form in nature is the same as saying that a horse is like a pool table, or a dragonfly like a seraph.

165. Going back to *outer* and *inner,* these are the terms I prefer, applied with strict relativism. I think they are more exact than *fixed* and *organic*. Moreover I like them better because they imply no conflict, no war, but rather a consonance. To my mind warring poets, because they are dealing with the very substance of truth,

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i.e., our vision of reality, are almost as dangerous and a good deal sillier than warring generals.

166. Of course I do not mean to deny what is as plain as the nose on anyone's face, e.g. that Alexander Pope wrote virtually all his poetry in closed pentameter couplets. But I would say three things. First, the misnamed "heroic couplet," which seems to us the height of artifice, was just the opposite in the minds of those who used it. Dryden chose the couplet because he thought it the plainest mode available, the verse "nearest prose," and he chose it in conscious reaction against the artificial stanzaic modes that had dominated English poetry during most of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In short, he and his followers thought they were liberating poetry, just as Coleridge and Wordsworth liberated it a hundred years later, or Pound and Williams a hundred years after that. The history of poetry is a continual fixing and freeing of conventions. It follows that these poets, Dryden and Pope, really were engaged in a liberation; and it follows too that we ought always to pay at least some attention to history and fashion, the worldly determinants, in our consideration of any poetry. Secondly, I do not think the couplet was a fixed form. I do not think it for the same reason that I do not think any form can be fixed. Granted, it was a pattern that was imitated by many versewriters. But among the best poets it was a form like any other poetic form: the natural, spontaneous (which does not mean instantaneous) effect of the causal topics, feelings, and attitudes from which their poems derived. It is evident in the best of Pope. He himself said: "I have followed . . . the significance of the numbers, and the adapting them to the sense, much more even than Dryden, and much oftener than anyone minds it. . . . The great rule of verse is to be musical." Today we do not like "numbers" and "rules"; but I get from this the distinct feeling that when Pope spoke of "adapting," he was thinking about poetic form in a way close to my own. And I know for certain that what he meant by "musical" had little to do with rhyming and everything to do with the total harmony of language and substance. Think of the material of Pope's poems. Could it have engendered any other poetic form? I believe the closed pentameter couplet was natural to Pope, "organic" if you like, and if his poems are not as well unified *poetically* as any others of a similar kind and scope, if the best of them are not *poems* in exactly the same sense we mean today, then I don't know how to read poetry. (But I do.) Thirdly, in another

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sense of the word, different from the sense I have been using, every poetic form is fixed. It cannot be otherwise. Unless a poem is destroyed as soon as it is written, its form exists as a thing in the world, to be observed by anyone who wishes to observe it, particularly by the poet who created it. Thus every poetic form exists in its permanent concreteness—relatively speaking, of course—and thus it gives rise to influence. It produces a convention, and this convention may re-enter the poet's sensibility and become part of the apparatus of imagination. It happens with all poets. After all Whitman continued to follow the conventions of his poems quite as narrowly as Pope followed the conventions of his; and in this sense the "organic" poets of today are writing in forms as fixed as any, as fixed, say, as the heroic couplet. I grant it would be difficult in practice to discriminate between what I am here calling a convention and what I earlier called a style; yet in theory it must be possible, because a style is what is expressive of a poet's personality, whereas a convention is a generalized "feeling" about language and structure, often with broadly cultural associations, which can enter anyone's sensibility, not just its creator's. It would be silly to deny a connection among James Wright, Galway Kinnell, and W. S. Merwin, for instance, or among Denise Levertov, Robert Creeley, and Robert Duncan. And I suspect that in part these connections consist of the poets' common and mostly unconscious awareness of conventions that have arisen from the multiplicity and multiplexity of their own created, "fixed" poetic forms.

167. Poetry is where you find it. Its form is always its own. The elements of outer form, such as language, tone, or texture, may move sometimes from and sometimes toward the elements of inner form, such as structures of imagery and feeling, symbols, or scarcely revealed nodes of imaginative energy. But if the poem is a real poem its whole form will be integrated. No element of outer form, considered apart from the rest, can signify whether or not a poem, an old poem or a new poem, is real; nor can any element of inner form, so considered. Hence the classification of poems, old or new, is a hurtful, false endeavor. Let the warring cease.

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THEODORE WEISS

News from Avignon

I

A stranger?
News from Avignon,
it's clear, or from a place, Palmyra,
you have never, not in fancy even,
visited.
A glance that, staking light
on carpets, chairs, your reproductions,
now selects by its peculiar background—
a Parisian, say, at home in this Picasso
as in Montparnasse, his favorite bistro,
for the sketches scattered, fireworks
of witty drink, no less a lavish palace—
many a feature in their background
you had hardly noticed.
(Like flowers
that emit no odor and confess few colors
till you press them. Innocent and yet
beneath the skin pure Persian.)

II

Just so
the sun, studying out the vase's scene,
reflecting on the titles of your books,
hazy with gold. One, open, 's never been
more boldly read.
And sauntering along
the dusky lane inside a print, the sun
makes—O its bantering observations,
witty glosses—light of it.
An instant
thicket overgrows. Oaks lofting perky

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leaves, the sun ignites tips, flickered
out like avid eyes, ignites a drowsy
moon which, though it blinks myopically,
almost confounds the sun.
Accordingly,
the night, loitering in the distance,
looms there, Nubian, its mysteries
glimmering around it.

III

Or at once
the stranger throws your window wide.
And breezes cast the room into a ring-
ing, new arrangement.
You are surprised
by your own things, a garland twining
with the vase's foliage, the carpet's
intricate traceries, its butterflies,
surpassing Venus' doves, and every furry
bird in full formation, swift-winged,
on the wall.
Like someone startled—
water caught with fishes its own flashes
body—nose hard-pressed against a pane,
the mirror, peering, cranes upon itself.

IV

Why not? The sun outside is also well
engaged, the flowers eager to unfold
their latest merchandise, goods smuggled
in last night—from Iran was it, Isfahan?—
that like a honey-bee the sun is mazed
by nectar ripening for it.
So gold
the wallpaper usually keeps—day lidded,

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nodding, all the day—in semi-dark,
set off by birds the garden doubles,
flaps away
as though your room
had suddenly been hurled into a far-
off country, rallied round to favor you
with gifts:
the things made intimately
strange and halo-wonderful for being
in your room.
And even trouble's—
this the point where you, your gloom-
compiled perplexities, come in, attaining
some perspective—having trouble playing
more than second fiddle to the sun
upon a progress.

V

Morning mounted, as one
glittering, gouty poet said, on afternoon,
how not capitulate to the swart stranger,
quarried out beyond all former seeings,
of yourself?
Especially as Renée,
dipped into morning and your hearing
with her bow, a recapitulation's twink-
ling frieze, is striking sparks spiccato,
demisemiquavering motes, from Beethoven,
Piano Trio Opus 70, No. 2?
The news
from Avignon, just now, as in that scene
and on a stunning scale—a very papal
opulence, a revery out of heaven itself
or out of Rome at least—developing.

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NANCY CARDOZO

Aurora Borealis

Winter lay down in the valley, giant
Hands in the harbor clasped
Water with marble.
Through the snow,
We saw a torso gleam.

The Great Bear swam among ice-floes, fishing
Pearls of drowned sea-farers,
Galaxies bubbling.
From his jaws
The constellations streamed.

Ice-cutters carving their diamonds—bright
Blades in the opaque glass—
Stole our reflections;
Faces, clouds,
Two skaters in a dance.

Remember—we rode the milky currents
Blown from the arctic. Light
Dancer, my double—
A cold knife
Severed you from my side.

Tell me, lost partner, did winter draw you
Under those smooth canals,
Indigo bridges,
where we leapt,
Hooded and gloved in frost?

Nightfall—when Venus rises in silver
Herring nets—do you touch
Her bloodless image,
scattering
Arrows of frozen stone?

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Caryatid I

Vertical dreamer—break
Apart from the light that holds
Column and sill;

Walk away from the house
Between the trees, the cold
Nave of night. Your thighs

Divide the undergrowth,
A dance of fireflies
Burning green gauze,

Leaving no comet trails,
No scars. Your shoulders pass
Into leaves. Your hands

Enter the branches, lose
Themselves like rain brushing
The forest's edge.

Far off, a dynamo
Revolves this night, a stroke
More powerful

Than that which moves your thighs,
An engine more precise
Than your great heart.

Caryatid II

Vertical dreamer—step
Out of the column, wake
From your stone sleep—

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A girl running away;
Placing her feet, comets
Of flesh on earth

Descending. Fireflies,
Chrysoprase moments pierce
Her rib-cage; arms

Outspread. Her shoulders break
From the white quarries, veined
With prisoners' blood.

Her fingers hold the blue
Distances. Dynamos
Pulse in her breasts.

Sensual engines spread
Cities around her knees—
Caryatid,

Unbind your fluted thighs—
The girl runs through the stone
To meet your stride.

Midsummer Night

Blood in an amber cup—
Translucent flesh
Shielding the match—We breathe
The fatal air,
Burnt inhalations drawn
Into our lungs.
The flame between us lights
No more than flintstones scratched
On a dark wall.

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Fingers on fingers touch.
Smoke signals. Sparks
From camp-fires we have watched
Circle our heads.
I cannot see your face,
But travelers crowned
With torches, caravans
Plunging into the wind.
The flame blows out.

What conflagrations blaze
Beyond our sight?
Deserts where beggars lift
Their burning hands;
Legions of children leap
In the bone-fires.
Our eyes reflect the heat
Of furnaces; their breath
Singes our lips.

Great moth—consume the flame
That eats us. Rain—
Open the mouths of caves
Where we may hide,
My love and I, as once
We lay with beasts
In the deep place, and saw
The sun at midnight strike
Their steaming sides.

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JAMES BAKER HALL

Hands

He took each print off the pile as though he were handling a piece of glass, touching only the edges, and examined the mat under a flood lamp; he used a green eraser (which he kept in the pocket of his shirt) to clean the mat, and a handkerchief to brush away the rubber shavings. Then he removed the tissue paper from between the mat and the print, careful not to crumple it, laying it on a large piece of black poster board; and examined the print itself under the light, holding it at an angle, using a three inch camel's hair brush to dust the surface. He was very much right there, absorbed in the minutia, but he was elsewhere too, enacting some old rite—which produced an intensity that was hypnotic. When he was satisfied that a photograph was ready to be looked at, he set it on a music stand in front of the light and stepped back, a half stride behind her.

In a little over an hour he showed her fifty prints, all of them from the late twenties and early thirties, a few nudes, a few heads, but mostly what has come to be known as his seed pictures, closeups of melons and fruits and seed pods. They are either very dark images, or very light, voluptuous shapes and textures, beautifully seen, almost hallucinatory in their clarity, austere, aristocratic, elegant, but always with a hint of madness; on the surface they are pictures of fruits and pods; underneath images of organs, lovers, the power of things. One after another he placed them on the music stand, and then stepped back. At first she was impressed, as she had been at his show (she'd met him a few nights before at the opening of his show at Cal), and then, as the images started burrowing in on her blind side, she was moved—a little more than she was comfortable with in fact.

When it was over she was exhausted.

How much of it was the photographs, how much him was hard to say, but there were several great pictures there, she was sure of that.

With his permission Martha went back through the stack, extracting a dozen or so, which he then put up, one at a time, for her to see again. She selected four to purchase.

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When she wrote out the check her hand was quivering.

She said, "I hope it's not presumptuous of me, but I felt very strongly that there are two prints there that shouldn't be there."

He stared at her, his eyes narrowing. For a moment she thought that she had over-stepped her bounds. But then he smiled. "Two?" he said, tilting his head with a playfulness that she hadn't seen before.

"Two that I felt strongly about. Several others maybe."

He went through the stack quickly, extracting two prints and laying them face down on the table. He was smiling. Then he went through again, pulling five others.

"Which two?" he asked.

She told him.

He turned his over—the same two.

She was enormously pleased with herself. And with him.

She could hardly believe that it wasn't foolish, such a game—but with him it wasn't.

"Which others?"

She told him.

They agreed on four out of five.

Extraordinary! It was as though they had discovered that they had known one another for a long time. Neither of them knew quite what to do with it though. They seized on their disagreements and argued about them exuberantly.

As she was getting ready to leave she asked him, "What are you doing now?"

"Nudes," he said. "Nudes and heads."

"I would like very much to see them."

"I'd like you to," he said, "soon."

The door opened, and in walked a young woman carrying a tray, a white porcelian tray with a wet print in it. Martha recognized her from the opening the other night, a tall slender woman, quite beautiful, with long brown hair and brown eyes. From all over the room the cats, stretching their hind legs, converged on her. As Derek introduced her—her name was Bodi—he took the tray, went to the light, and examined the print carefully. Bodi watched him, her head tilted in anticipation. She looked over at Martha and smiled. Tails up, backs arched, the cats laced in and out at her feet, leaning against her trouser legs, but she paid no attention to them at all.

"It's still not right," he said.

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Bodi turned away in disgust.

"I'm sorry," he said, putting his arm around her. She was nearly as tall as he was, and almost young enough to be his daughter, twenty-two or three perhaps. He held the tray under the light, and with the forefinger of his right hand, like a cook stirring a dish, he traced a shape above the print.

"You've got to open that up," he told her.

"May I see?" Martha asked, taking a step toward them.

"No!" Bodi said, and then to soften her bluntness, she smiled and touched the back of Martha's hand and said, "If you don't mind."

Martha backed off immediately. "Sorry," she said. It was her mistake, and she knew it.

"Am I crazy?" he asked Bodi.

She stuck her tongue out at him. "Of course you're crazy," she said, taking the tray and heading back to the darkroom. "But that doesn't mean you're not *right*!"

When Martha left she bade the cats goodby, calling each by name, which was how he had introduced them. That obviously impressed him and pleased him—as she knew it would.

All the way home Martha was ecstatic, the four prints there on the seat beside her. The evening had been a stunning success, more than she had hoped for really, much more. His studio (which was where he lived too) was clean and carefully kept, with a kind of Oriental simplicity, only one bed, a single, covered with an army blanket, no pillow (which suggested, as she saw it now, that that girl wasn't living with him), but the place was small, much smaller than she had expected Derek Madden's studio to be, and the furniture was a hodgepodge of throw-aways. She had been shocked by the poorness of it, and saddened, but she had the feeling now that she shouldn't be. She didn't like Bodi, in fact she disliked her, but she wasn't going to let that get in the way.

His hands, she couldn't get over his hands! They were so subtle and precise, the way he handled his prints, the eraser, that brush, elegant but at the same time very powerful. What a shame it was he couldn't photograph his own hands, they were the essence of his subject matter!

The next day she was preoccupied with the need to level with him. She'd gone there not simply to buy more prints (she'd purchased two from the show), but to explore the possibility of writing an article about him. Several times she had the phone in her hand

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to call him, but she couldn't do it. That evening she sat down at her desk with a cup of tea and wrote him a letter, justifying at length such formality on the grounds that what she was talking about was in essence a professional consideration for both of them, not a personal one. . . . She closed the letter:

> God knows the art world is full of parasites. Whatever your reaction to the ideas I've sketched out here, I hope that it will not in any way redefine for you my response to your work. Last night was one of the most moving experiences of my life. I've never been more deeply affected by a group of pictures. I hope that this letter in no way complicates our plan to do it again. One thing I do have in this world in abundance is money, and I intend to spend it as I see fit. Which involves the acquisition of the world's foremost collection of Maddens. My regards to Bodi.

Two days later she got this reply in the mail.

> My dear Martha—Of course you can write about me. You understand my work better than I do, I'm sure of it. I'm honored. But only if you cease sounding like an academic hussy—so solemn and scrupulous! I'll tell you everything I know, and lots that I don't. I almost bought a Bonsai with your money, but bought food instead. I must be getting old. Call immediately—come immediately—for supper—if you can stand to eat with vegetarians. Bodi sends her best. Love, Derek

She was elated. And she went straight to the phone. Derek wasn't there—she was talking to Bodi.

"This is Martha Mahler," she said.

"Oh hello!" Bodi said.

"I just got a note from Derek . . ."

"I know!" Bodi said.

"I was wondering if perhaps the two of you could meet me tonight in Sausalito for supper."

"That would be wonderful!"

"Is 6:30 agreeable?"

"That's fine."

"I'll pick you up."

There was a silence at Bodi's end.

"Isn't that out of your way?" Bodi said. "Won't you be coming from Berkeley?"

"But Derek doesn't drive, does he?"

"No," Bodi said with a laugh, "but I do."

"Of course," Martha said. "How stupid of me. I'm sorry."

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"That's all right," Bodi said. "It happens all the time."

"I know only too well that it happens all the time," Martha said, "believe me. And it's *not* all right—I'm sorry. Are we all set then? Should I call back to confirm it?"

There was another silence, this one even more awkward.

"No," Bodi said with that same laugh again. "We'll be there."

"Wonderful!" Martha said. "I'm looking forward to it."

And they hung up.

Martha slammed her hand down flat on the desk in disgust. What was the *matter* with her that she couldn't talk to that girl without making a fool of herself? She had only herself to blame, though—Bodi had done nothing.

When Derek walked into the restaurant, he was alone. Which pained Martha, and filled her, momentarily, with anxiety.

"Bodi sends her apologies," he said. "She was working well and didn't want to quit."

"I'm sorry," Martha said. She knew why Bodi wasn't there, and wondered whether or not he did.

"She's learning to take herself seriously," he said.

"Is she good? I'd like to see some of her work."

"She's *going* to be *damn* good."

During dinner they chatted, mostly about her. She was an art historian, and teacher, one of the few women at that time (the late thirties) on the faculty at the University of California in Berkeley; they knew some of the same people, shared many of the same interests, but that wasn't what he seemed to be interested in. She did most of the talking, but usually in response to his questions, which were somehow extraordinarily intimate without being personal. What he was interested in, it seemed, was how she felt—about whatever. What he was, she decided later, was a great audience: he didn't talk much, but he wasn't passive, not *at all:* he watched you and listened to you with a concentration that bordered always on making you uncomfortable. It was as though he were experiencing you through a magnifying glass—which, disconcerting as it could be at times, was enormously flattering. It did wonders for casual conversation—in his presence you heard yourself and saw yourself with his attention, which had a way of burning away fog and superficialities you didn't even know were there. You had the feeling that he was constantly evaluating everything you said and did, not whether it was smart or stupid or right or

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wrong, but whether it was genuine or not. What his presence did was make you feel real; or, more exactly, make you feel a little unreal at first, and then, if you were up to it, real. Martha would have liked to believe that it had something to do with her personally, but she suspected it was the way he engaged whoever he was with or whatever was in front of him. It was exhilarating, there was no question about that, but she wasn't sure how much of it one could take.

He'd brought his journal from the late twenties, and after dinner he read to her, commencing with passages having specifically to do with the photographs they had been looking at the other night. He'd sent prints of the fruits and seed pods to a friend in Europe, and another in New York, and they in turn had shown them to other of his friends, and admirers, and he'd gotten back, laced into a chorus of praise, a reaction that had left him more irritated than pleased. Everybody had found the images profoundly visceral, and most of them erotic, a reaction that he rejected out of hand. In one journal entry he quoted Inge as saying, "My God, Derek, are you all right? I can't look at these pictures without thinking of making love." And then himself went on to say, "How ludicrous, the idea of me sexually frustrated, or sublimating my sexual energies in my art! The two things are separated, once and for all, in the fruits and pods. Finally! It hasn't always been true, not with my nudes, but it's true with this new work. Why is it that every time I do something new no one knows how to look at it? Is the world now taken over with fools who can't see anything erect without thinking it's a phallic symbol? Inge, and John, and Henri, of all people! If I didn't know better I would think that Inge needed a lover!"

Martha was dumbfounded. Inge and John and Henri and all the rest were absolutely *right* about the fruits and pods, there was no question in her mind about it at all; but she didn't dare say anything—did she? Why in the world did he feel obliged to object to the idea that those pictures were erotic?

When they got back to his place he fixed tea and got out another stack of prints. Martha tried to concentrate, but she kept expecting Bodi to walk in any minute, and she simply couldn't keep her mind on the pictures. When he finished, she had no idea how she felt about what she had seen, and she told him, asking that they look at those again some other time.

"Take them home with you," he said.

That surprised her, and pleased her a great deal. "May I?"

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"That's probably the way we ought to work it anyway."

As he was counting the prints, and stacking them in a box for her to carry, she asked whether it would be all right for her to go down to the darkroom and get Bodi.

"Wait a minute and I'll go with you," he said without looking up.

"Would it be all right if I went by myself?"

He hesitated for a moment, glancing at her—more surprised, she thought, than suspicious. "Of course."

Martha was determined to like Bodi, and to have Bodi like her. She found her washing prints.

"You're back!" the girl said.

"Will you come up and have tea with us?"

"I'd *love* to," Bodi said. "I hope you'll forgive me for running out on dinner. I was printing better than I have in a long time and I figured I'd better not quit. When Derek's working well he won't stop to eat or sleep or anything."

"Can I see some of your work?" Martha asked.

Bodi didn't seem to know quite how to handle that. "I haven't got a lot yet that's worth paying much attention to."

"I'd like very much to see what you're doing."

Bodi showed her the three prints she'd made that evening, and then got out her portfolio, a beautiful hand-made leather carrying case which contained maybe twenty prints in all. Most of it was what you would expect, imitation Madden, but she was technically very competent, and one could see the stirrings there of something of her own. There in the studio alone, going through Bodi's portfolio, they were certainly more comfortable with one another, the two women, than they had been before. Martha couldn't take her eyes off the carrying case, wanted to fondle and smell it, to ask where she'd gotten it, but she made herself attend to the photographs. There was one print in particular, a picture of Derek's hands, that Martha liked very much, and she would have singled that one out to buy had it not been for the delicacy of the choice. Instead she picked one of a Mill Valley storefront, the one most unlike Derek's work.

"I'd like to own this," Martha said.

"Really?"

"How much do you get for your prints?"

"I don't know, I've never sold one."

"Twenty-five dollars?"

"That's what Derek gets!"

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"Why should you get less?"

Bodi fluttered her hands in a charming gesture of uncertainty and excitement. "I've never thought about it," she said.

There was an awkward pause. It seemed to Martha that they were at a delicate turn, could go either way, into some sort of acknowledgement of one another, or back into their little dance of suspicion.

"It's the only print of that I've got," Bodi said.

"Well make me one," Martha said. She was irritated by the girl, quite irritated, but she was determined not to show it. "And you've just made your first sale."

Working with Madden changed Martha's life. He was an early riser, and she became one too, often standing at the window in her study when the light came, a warm cup of tea in her hands. She loved meat too much to become a vegetarian, and loved expensive meals in expensive restaurants too much to give up haute cuisine, but his near obsession with food made her more and more scrupulous about her body. She started doing exercises and paying a lot more attention to nutrition. She had her study renovated, and part of the downstairs, moving a whole wall of bookshelves into the livingroom in order to have a proper place and the proper light for viewing his prints. What began as a small project very quickly became a grand one: obviously an article wasn't enough: what was called for was a monograph, and one that was done right. With a research grant from the University she hired one of her graduate students to work in the library, preparing a bibliography, and Martha set about educating herself in the history of photography and searching for the right publisher. Against the possibility that they wouldn't be able to get the sort of commitment from a trade house that she wanted, she began marshalling her personal resources, visiting friends and colleagues in the Bay Area, writing friends on the east coast, discussing the possibility of subscriptions that would underwrite the book. Whenever she wasn't in class, or preparing her classes, she was working with Derek Madden's photographs. It all but destroyed what was left of an overextended dolorous love affair she was having with an economics professor, a German refugee named Gerhart. For seven years she had been refusing to marry him, and now she was refusing, as often as not, to spend the weekends with him, even to have their traditional Wednesday night dinner in the city. Gerhart was threatening to

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take up with another woman, and Martha was anxious only that he wouldn't.

Madden gave her complete freedom with his prints, but he wouldn't let her touch his journals. He read to her from them extensively, and allowed her to take whatever notes she wanted, but he wouldn't let her take them home with her, wouldn't even let her read them with him standing right there. What in the world he was editing out of them she couldn't imagine, for he read her what would seem to be the most intimate details from his private life. Surrounded by women, and by his three sons, whom he loved very deeply, and by the constant demands of his work as a professional photographer, his life as an artist was in constant jeopardy.

> N. called last night. I had promised myself that I would print the new bowls, but the sound of her voice and so much for my work. Who am I trying to kid? When did I ever choose to work when there was a woman around? No wonder so much of my work is nudes—it's only with nudes that I don't have to choose! We met downtown and walked about until after midnight, looking in store windows and holding hands like a couple of kids. Just being close to her excited me. It was as though there were nothing else in the world. But of course there is—the new negatives for one thing. I've got to get to them. Maybe Wednesday. N. wanted to come back and spend the night here, but how could she? Both Wilson and Bumper are here with me, and Johnny coming tomorrow. And all of them sleeping on the floor because their father doesn't have enough money to bed them!—It's five a.m.—only four hours sleep—but I feel fine. If I don't get up early when the boys are here I never have any time to myself. How beautiful they are, asleep there on the floor! Maybe I should take some time off and make some money so that I could give them a decent life! People think I like to live this way, but I don't. I would like to have a big house, with privacy for everybody, and enough money not to worry. Money! It's only unimportant when you've got it. For me, that's never. And I've got that awful bitch coming back again today for her proofs. I make her twice as attractive as she is, and she's still not satisfied!

He even read her a passage in which he was blatantly condescending to women. "Name a great woman painter! Name a woman poet the stature of Chaucer, or Milton, or Shakespeare! Name a great woman composer! There aren't any because all they really want to do is have babies! Well I say let them *have* babies, let's just cut out all this hypocrisy. The next bitch who comes in here swinging a camera instead of her tail I'm going to toss out on her ear." When Martha heard that she bristled. If he could read her *that,* what in God's name could he be editing out? She was left

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alone once in his studio, and she was sorely tempted to sneak a look at the journals—but she didn't. Despite the condescension here and there, and the insatiable sexuality, Madden emerged from his journals, in Martha's eyes, as a man who loved women very deeply, if somewhat childishly. In all other matters he was fairly practical, but when it came to women he was the most starry-eyed romantic she had ever encountered, given to sitting for hours at a time lost in rapture over some woman's smile or hair or hands or voice. Four or five men loomed large in his life, but nothing really to compare with the women. Although he had been involved with several women early in his life he seemed not to have fallen in love until he was past thirty, when he went off to Europe with Inge, leaving his wife and children. It wasn't until then that he made his first great photographs. And from then on he seemed never out of love for long, sometimes with several women at once, many of them dancers. They would come to his studio to pose, and likely as not they ended up, eventually, in bed. He never sought them out, they always came to him—something which he professed to be unable to understand. The most touching passage for Martha in all the journals spoke of his incredulity at the attraction he held for women.

> Why me? A small not particularly attractive man with no money, very little time, and three children, and an obsession with work. I'm no Don Juan. I never have been. I've never gone after more than two or three women in my life. And yet they come here one after another. What is it they see in me? I'm not even a good lover. I haven't got the patience. It usually ends up boring me. Except perhaps with Inge. Or now with N.

When he read that, Martha broke out laughing; she leaned over and squeezed the back of his hand.

"What?" he said.

"Poor Derek!"

"Say!"

"Poor naive Derek!"

"Well *explain* it to me," he said.

"I will *not*!" she said.

"What is it? I don't even have time—"

Strange as it was he didn't seem to be asking to be told how sexy he was. She took his incredulity, both in the journal and here now, at face value.

"Well it's *not* because you're the world's greatest photographer!"

"Are you *sure*?"

"Oh—so you *are* the world's greatest photographer, huh?"

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He got furious at that. "Don't play games with me!"

"I'm sorry," she said. "No, it's not because you're a famous photographer. But you're probably a great photographer for the same reason that women fall in love with you."

He was beginning to clam up. He wouldn't ask her to explain that, but she had the feeling that he wanted her to.

"You can pay more attention to a woman in a few hours than most men can pay in a month. And better attention."

"Well thank you," he said.

"Despite your little tirade about having babies, there are some women in the world who want romance, not domesticity. And romance comes a few hours at a time, or a few days." She hesitated, unsure whether to go on. "I know I'd rather watch your hands than go to bed with most of the men I know." And then added quickly, "And I'll bet Bodi would too."

Abruptly he said, "Let's quit this talk."

She could have bit her tongue out.

Evidently he knew that, and didn't want her to feel that way, for a while later he apologized for being so hard to talk to. He wasn't anti-intellectual, he said, it was just that he wasn't used to being around such a verbal person. Her mind was, he hoped she realized, just a little intimidating at times.

Mixed in with her study of his work and his readings from the journals were trips with him into the field. Watching him work was, for Martha, like watching a fire in a fireplace—not much happened, but it was mesmerizing. His work was widely known, especially among photographers, for its technical brilliance, virtuosity even, but you could never guess that from seeing him work. He had very little equipment, some of it in ill repair; many of his best negatives had been made with an old Rapid Rectilinear lens that he'd gotten second-hand for $5. He never used an exposure meter, or measured bellows extension, or calculated reciprocity law failure—he did everything by the seat of his pants. He treated his equipment as though it had a life of its own—he talked to it, he fondled it, he listened to it, like a root doctor handling his charms. He was forever worried about the influence of his commercial work on his gear; he believed that he could purify himself of it, but he was never sure that he wasn't damning his cameras. Indecision, dullness, bad food, bad feelings, poisons of any kind would cause him to stay away from his personal work; in the past he'd often tried to redeem bad times with his cameras, but he'd come to the

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conclusion that that was a trap, a treacherous way of living with sloppiness. He didn't *take* photographs so much as he received them, and everything depended finally on spiritual poise and alertness, on a kind of grace. In his day to day life he was as vicissitudinous as the next person, but when he was working, especially on his own pictures, he was virtually imperturbable; he could spend an hour getting ready to make a negative, and then, if the light changed or his equipment got recalcitrant, walk away seemingly without frustration or disappointment, accepting the world's wisdom as greater than his own. When he was photographing, he created a space around himself that seemed inviolable, a kind of magnetic field. She found it very exciting to watch him with his camera, the intensity of it, the grace, but whereas Bodi walked right up to him sometimes when he was working, Martha always kept her distance.

Try as she did Martha could never seem to get comfortable with Bodi, or with them as a couple, which depressed her. She wanted to believe that the awkwardness was superficial, and that patience and understanding would prove that to them all. The girl was at the studio virtually every day, often from early in the morning until late at night. She had plenty of time to pursue her own work, and she did, very conscientiously, but whenever Derek needed her she was at his side, dealing with clients, helping him print, taking care of the children (she was wonderful with his children, a mixture of mother, governess, and older sister), tending to whatever came up. As far as anyone could tell, Derek and Bodi very much included, the girl was perfectly satisfied with the terms of her relationship with him, but Martha could never escape the idea that Bodi was fooling herself, that she accepted those terms because it was the only way she could have him, that if she could have it her way they would be married, or at least living together—some promise of a future. Everything in Derek Madden's life had to answer to his work, and what wouldn't answer to it had to go; it was a wonderful place to visit, Martha was fond of thinking, but you couldn't live there. Not even Derek Madden could do that—just the work. There was a spoiled brat in Bodi—not only was she beautiful and gifted, but her family was well off, she'd been to a fancy eastern girls' school, had had everything—and Martha took some pleasure in seeing her answer, probably for the first time in her life, to someone more powerful than she; but Martha no longer disliked the girl, not very often anyway: the tension between them followed on a

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thwarted sympathy rather than a lack of it, a feeling of deep kinship that could never seem to get acknowledged simply and clearly. Martha felt that they had a good deal in common, more in fact than either of them had with Derek Madden, but the situation seemed to preclude dealing with that, in fact seemed to force them to act out roles that were forever invoking jealousies and confusing the basic realities. Bodi wasn't an artist; perhaps she would be some day, but now she was a young woman far more interested in her life than her work, and yet she was constantly confusing herself with Derek, and very much isolating herself in the process. Whenever the two women were alone together the atmosphere was charged for Martha with a sense of expectation, and for Bodi too it seemed, a feeling that now they were free to get on with it, but nothing much ever came of it; they would go shopping, or to the post office, or to the art supply store, some charm would come between them, some recognition, some possibility, but they always ended up doing the same awkward little dance with one another, Derek very much between them even in his absence.

On the way back from a field trip one day, when they were alone, Derek said, "You know you've never said anything about the new stuff."

She had been dreading this. Most of what he was talking about were nudes, all of them of Bodi. "You want to know the truth?"

"No," he said. "Just praise."

"I think you ought to quit doing nudes."

She was driving. And she used that as a kind of protection.

"Why?"

"You're no longer awed."

"Really?"

He wasn't taking badly to what she was saying, not at all.

"The awe is in the trees and the rocks now. Put the recent nudes down beside some of those earlier ones. The ones of Inge especially. The difference is subtle, but it's critical." Delicate as the subject was, it wasn't nearly as delicate as what it touched on, which was Bodi, and his relationship with her, a subject they had skittered away from several times before. Bodi had an exquisite body, more beautiful, without question, than Inge's, or any of the rest, and the whole problem, as Martha saw it, was right there, Bodi's and his, *and* the pictures'. Martha had no idea whether they could talk about that, or should try even.

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"You're right!" he said finally.

She looked at him. He was beaming.

She was enormously relieved, and pleased.

"You're right!" he said, slapping his hand down on his knee. He slid across the seat and kissed her on the cheek. "God damn it, Martha Mahler, you're *right*!"

"Of course I'm right," she said. "Why on earth do you sound so surprised?"

"Why coudn't *I* see that?"

He stayed in the middle of the seat, turned toward her as she drove, his arm stretched along the back of the seat. She could feel him smiling at her. "You're right!" he kept saying, "Sonofabitch, you are *right*!"

She told him about having offered to buy one of Bodi's prints weeks ago. The girl had never said any more about it. Martha was puzzled by the whole thing, and quite frankly, she confessed, at times very irritated. She'd made mistakes with Bodi, there was no question about it, but her offer to buy the print was genuine, and she felt abused by the girl's silence.

"She thought you were being condescending."

"Condes*cend*ing!?"

"She thought you were treating her like a child."

That little bitch! Of all the nerve! The trouble was—hard as it was for Martha to admit—there was a lot of truth in what Bodi said, perhaps too much. Still she couldn't tolerate her getting off scot-free. "You know what Bodi's problem is?"

"She's hooked up with *me*," Derek said.

"No, *that's* manageable. If there's anything to her at all she'll turn that to her advantage. Her problem is, she's beautiful. It destroys women, every time. All her life people have been hovering around her, paying attention to her, wondering what she's thinking, wondering what she's going to do next. She's never *had* to respond. When one guy gets fed up there's another one right there in his place. She's got the power to move people, but she doesn't have the power to be moved. She doesn't have to *feel* anything, other people are always doing the feeling. We're all taught to envy beautiful people, well I don't. It's kid stuff. It's the most crippling thing in the world."

"Don't tell me," Derek said, "tell her."

"How can I tell her that? I'm a *threat* to her. She's not going to listen to *me*!"

"You underestimate her. About all other things in the entire

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world you're absolutely right, Martha Mahler, the smartest woman alive, but about Bodi—you underestimate her."

And he leaned over and kissed her on the cheek again.

They went back to her place first so that she could shower and change. She wanted to take him out to eat, and Bodi too, if they could find her and she would condescend to come. As Martha was shaving her legs, she watched her reflection in the full length mirror on the back of the bathroom door. With her leg up that way she didn't look half bad. Her ankles were still thin, and her calves still had their shape. If she lost five to eight pounds over all, maybe ten, she'd be presentable enough again. More than presentable, by God, considering her age. Getting out of the tub she put one foot up on the side and, still watching herself in the mirror, leaped gracefully onto the rug in a private little ballet. She was feeling pretty good—fact is, she pointed out to herself in the mirror, she was feeling *awfully* good! Next summer, tennis every day. She would lose ten pounds in a month. She turned half way around and looked at her rear. Well—it had looked better, there was no use in kidding herself, but at her age it could look a lot worse.

Then it hit her what she was doing. And she made a disgusted face at herself in the mirror. Maybe an American woman couldn't hope to see her body ageing without panic, but she would be damned if she would be ruled by that. She was thirty-seven years old, she wouldn't be a day younger for anything, not for anything, and she wasn't about to regret what those years had done to her body. The pounds, the sags, the grey hairs, they were proof that the world had used her, that she was a woman and not a girl. She was more powerful now than she had ever been, certainly one hell of a lot more powerful than any twenty-two year old girl, and anybody who didn't recognize that wasn't worth fooling with in the first place.

And while she was accounting to herself she took note of what happened in the car, the way she had talked about Bodi. She hadn't said anything that she didn't believe, but she'd grossly oversimplified her view of the girl, and she wished she hadn't done it. Was it impossible for a woman to talk to a man honestly about another woman? She had betrayed Bodi, she had betrayed herself, she had betrayed all women. And then there she had to sit, listening to Derek tell her that she underestimated the girl—*Derek* tell her *that*!

Martha lifted her chin arrogantly and looked at herself in the mirror. She closed her eyes, and in a kind of trance breathed

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deeply, once, twice, three times, deeper each time, and then raised the index finger of her right hand slowly up to her face, touched her nose, the tip of her nose, ever so gently, then ran the tip of her finger down across her upper lip, back and forth slowly once in the furrow between her lips, down then over her chin and her neck, slowly, over the adam's apple, and down, tracing a slow small circle in the little cavity between her breast bones, then slowly down between her breasts, and on down across her stomach, and down, to the belly button, where her finger stopped, momentarily, tracing, probing, and then down again, drawing a fine line, so delicate, from her belly button to her pubic hair, and then down, farther, slowly, sinking in over the clitoris, and then disappearing, her fist pressed tightly between her legs, which were still together. Opened her eyes. And there she stood for a moment, motionless, chin raised, staring arrogantly at herself in the mirror.

She knew then what she wanted to give Derek—of course, why hadn't she thought of it before!

"Derek!"

"Ho!"

"Come up here a minute!"

As he came up the stairs she closed the bathroom door, leaving a crack for them to talk through.

"I've got something for you!"

"Okay!"

"Go into the bedroom."

He didn't move.

"Go on!" she told him. "I'll tell you what to do when you get there."

He went into her bedroom.

"See the picture on the wall next to the vanity? The only one in the whole room that's not a Madden?" It was a nude of her that Imogene Cunningham had done years ago (and a few pounds ago too!)—it was the perfect gift.

"I do," he said.

"That's yours too! I just gave it to you!"

"Really?"

"Really!"

There was a long pause. She was looking at her reflection in the mirror on the back of the door, imagining him in the other room looking at her picture, imagining his hands as he reached up to take it down.

"Well, take it down, dummy."

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He came back carrying the framed photograph in both hands.

"You never told me you sat to Imogene."

"My dear, there are *lots* of things I've never told you!"

"It's quite nice," he said.

"It's not a Madden, but then we're not all of us *that* lucky. It's a Cunningham, next best thing."

"It's quite nice," he said again.

"Then why don't you be quite nice, and give a quite nice little thank-you kiss through the quite nice little crack in the door, thank you." She stuck her face through the door, and he gave her a peck on the lips and then another on the nose. "Thank you," she said.

"Thank *you*," he said. "It's very nice. Are you about ready?"

She probably ought to stop right there, she thought, for she always ended up regretting moods like this, but she felt too good really to stop anything. "Oh Derek, not nearly nice enough for a gift for you. But it's the best the poor girl's got, will have to do! The story of her life, in fact. The only time she was ever photographed in the nude twas by another woman, ta-la! How do you expect me to get ready with you standing there between me and my clothes? Fix yourself another drink. I'll be with you in a minute."

Had she gone too far? As she was dressing she fought back traces of anxiety. Just let it happen, she told herself, just let it happen. When she got downstairs, ready to go to dinner, he was gone. On her desk was the picture she had just given him, with a note.

> My dearest Martha; I'm terribly terribly sorry, but I'm afraid that I can not accept this gift. I fear I have allowed myself to be misunderstood, for which I accept complete responsibility. We can not become lovers. I wish that we could, of course, but we must not. It would not be fair to either of us, or our work. Or Bodi. I hope you will not take this personally, though I guess that is being pretty naive. I certainly don't wish to terminate our relationship, which has been a godsend to me. I would hate to see it changed. It is so nourishing to us both the way it is. Please call whenever you want to come over. Soon I hope. You will always be welcome. Love, Derek

She had to read the note several times before she got it all. It was as though she were reading a secret medical report on herself, in a language hard to understand. At first she was ashamed—then furious. The nerve of him to read that gesture so simply! Men were incredibly gross—she'd never known one who didn't have at least one hand on his balls all the time.

She went to the window, peered out from behind the curtain to

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make sure there was no one in the back yard. Then she pulled the curtains. She went through every room, making sure that no one was in the house, and pulling all the curtains. She locked the front door and then the back door. She took all his pictures off the walls, took them out of their frames, and stacked them on her desk. Then she took them, one at a time, and tore them up. Half way through she was exhausted, and crying. She quit abruptly, and turned away, her face in her hands. Probably twenty prints lay in shreds, her gift to Derek and his note buried under the mess. Slowly she made her way upstairs to bed.

In the days that followed she tried to sustain her anger, but she came to believe that he had behaved more honorably than she, and to regret the destruction of his prints, regret it profoundly. How she would ever be able to tell him she didn't know; but she called one afternoon and they chatted for quite a while. Neither of them mentioned the rift, and except for a change in tone they were able to act as though nothing had happened. He invited her to go to the coast shooting with him and Bodi that weekend, and she accepted without hesitation.

Martha took a sketch book, which she had never done before, and instead of following the photographers around, she went off on her own. She was depressed. Although they were able to be cordial with one another, and no doubt in time would recapture some of their friendship, it was obvious to her now that they would never recapture the intensity they had had. Perhaps, she thought, that was all to the good—it was just too hard on people their age. Nonetheless it saddened her. She knew that in time Derek's art would emerge for her again, and that she would always have that, and that in the end it was more important than either of them, than anything else, and that her responsibility now lay in honoring it, which meant getting the monograph done, perhaps even—she would have to think about this some more—honoring the life that made it.

From where she was sitting with her sketch book, on a big flat rock safely back from the cliffs, Martha could see both Derek and Bodi, off in separate places, working. It frightened her, as it never had before, to watch them toting those big awkward cameras over the rocks and down the sandy slopes, and she envied their concentration: it seemed not only to make them heedless of danger, but actually to protect them from it as well.

She started sketching a rock formation, which metamorphosed

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into a photographer, which metamorphosed into Derek's hand, as they had been seen in Bodi's photograph. She started to scratch all that out, but something stopped her. She wrote the girl's name under the sketch instead, Bodi, and then repeated it, hypnotically, all over the page, Bodi, Bodi, Bodi, Bodi.

Holding her sketch book between her teeth in order to free her hands, Martha left her rock and worked her way down the steep path in search of a better vantage point. She lost her footing, slid a ways, grabbing at rocks and shrubs. She got herself under control, momentarily, and then in an effort to save her sketch book she took a much worse fall, head over heels—She landed flat on her back on a sloping rock face, spun and slid sideways, and then dropped straight down like a dead weight onto a ledge. Give or take inches, she would have fallen several hundred feet to her death.

When she came to she was looking straight up: gulls, clouds, blue sky.

She couldn't quite figure out which life she was in.

"Derek!" she called. "Derek!"

She felt very strange, wasn't sure that she was making any sound at all. Or that it made any difference really.

"Derek! Help!"

It all had something to do with something else, and she wasn't prepared for that. But you had to pretend. You had to play that game in that world because it was real too.

It was Bodi who heard her, and came to her rescue, scrambling down the path, rocks and dirt kicking out ahead of her. Of course it was Bodi who heard her, she would hear Derek's name anywhere, that was the beauty of it, for she played that game too, she knew that people heard what they heard. When Bodi held out her hand, and when Martha took it, and held it tightly, she knew where she was and what was happening, the California coast, the fall, Derek Madden, and she knew that it was all a terrible misunderstanding.

"I'm sorry," Martha said. "I'm terribly sorry!"

"You're going to be all right," Bodi said.

"I'm *terribly* sorry," Martha kept saying.

They worked their way very slowly back up, first Bodi in front, then Martha. At the top they rested for a while, then Bodi helped her to the car, and started tooting the horn frantically for Derek. A full hour must have passed from the time Martha disappeared until they were in the car again, and Derek was only a hundred yards away, but he was absorbed in his work, and he had no idea that anything was wrong until he heard that horn.

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Martha's lacerations were treated in the emergency room, she was examined and x-rayed, and released from the hospital early in the evening. They took her home, and together got her settled. Derek wanted for both of them to spend the night there, but Martha insisted that she was all right, that she would call if she needed anything, that she wanted to be alone now. As they were leaving, Bodi signaled that she wanted to come back alone and asked with her lips whether it was all right.

Martha smiled and nodded, of course.

A while later Bodi was back, grinning, her sleeping bag under her arm.

Martha told her about destroying the prints.

"Don't worry about it," Bodi told her. "We'll reprint them."

"He shouldn't spend his time reprinting," Martha said. "He's not going to live forever. He should be making new pictures."

"I'll print them," Bodi said.

"You will *not*," Martha said. "You'll make your own pictures!"

When Bodi turned out the light and went downstairs to sleep Martha lay in the dark and imagined herself on her death bed. She would send out a call for all her loved ones, and all of them would come, from wherever they were, all of them would come to her bedside and hold her hand and tell her that they loved her, always had, always would. Even if it weren't true they would tell her that, and even if she knew it weren't true, she would believe it. And she would tell them the same thing, that she loved them, that she always had, that she always would. What a relief it would be not to have to worry about all the subtleties and complications, to be able to speak simply from the heart without fear!

I love you, I always have, I always will!

During the night Bodi came up several times to check on Martha, who was restless, calling out in her sleep. She took the woman's hand, and spoke gently to her, and quieted her. When Martha woke in the morning Bodi was asleep in the rocker by the side of the bed, her head fallen over beautifully on her shoulder. The light in the room was gentle and loving, but strong. It was Derek's kind of light—she had learned to see it from him. She watched it strengthen and come to full life on the girl's beautiful face. When Bodi opened her eyes, Martha was looking at her, and they both smiled.

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JOYCE CAROL OATES

Earth-Rituals

Earth, give me roots!
—*Timon of Athens*

tendrils tough as muscle pry, seek, poke
into the lead pipes
fathoms beneath the house
in dizzying oceanic silence

their quarrels lack brutality
because they are silent
for decades, for centuries, they pry and seek
probable pathways, they poke into one another
by accident
yet in perfect union:
as a dreamer wisely embraces his dream

the thunderous staccato of rain
the blaring of maddened red sirens
the bombs whose noise cannot be registered
the birds' interwoven cries—
are muffled in earth
muffled by earth
in that shadowless silence
where nothing registers
and the dreamer may spin
unknowing through parts of himself:
former lives, future lives, prying into
the lives of others, his dream-images innocent
as roots,
no boundaries
no rituals
no obvious struggles

except the occasional heaving of the earth
the realignment of what had been permanent

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The Creation

A lightning-stroke,
    and we appear.
A lightning-stroke,
    and we appear to each other.

A commandment on a mossy rock:
Live as if you were immortal.
Then the counter-signs, the cautionary
Beware—
        every pore is a betrayal—
            there will be sharp turns ahead—
A lightning-stroke,
    and shadows also appear.
Perfect, are we? Already in love?
We quarrel to gain our souls.

Many Are Called

The great tide of noon!—and a flood
of voices, unchorused.
Thistles regain their pollen.
Junked autos heave from ditches.

Unwary in opposition
we pass too close to each other—
we are drawn together—
voiceless, we disappear
into each other.
It is August: in a creekbed, an enormous boulder
greens and richens with slime.

Our omens were always correct.
Our interpretations were faulty.
And our farewells?—premature.
It seems that all are chosen.

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The Playground

9000 feet above sea level
are streets closed off to traffic
as young Americans wander in summer
eying the quaint quiet authenticity
of late Victorian homes

aging children in jeans and hiking shoes
blue-eyed, tanned, wonderfully marvelling
at the mountains and the leisure
that surround them

the flatland?
hundreds of miles of scrub-grass, of cattle,
of pavement steaming in the August heat?
next September? next Friday? next year?

the altitude leaves them breathless
with the joy of children

a bearded boy of thirty speaks of Key West,
of Sausalito, of finding someone to feed him—
sighing, yawning, scratching at his bare stomach

the girls are lithe and quick
their partly-revealed bodies do not interest anyone
so artlessly exposed
so indifferently offered

a playground of motorcycles and back-packs
of mountain skies that change between the strokes
of a greeting and a farewell
9000 feet above sea level
breathless in wonder at the mountains
and what they conceal

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C. G. HANZLICEK

Stars

> It's been estimated that atoms in your body have been through several stars—that they were ejected many times as gas from exploding stars.
>
> —Jeremiah P. Ostriker

Seattle
Chief of the Suquamish and Duwamish
Said when a white man dies
He no longer loves the earth
He wanders among the stars
Shedding his life
Skin by skin
Until there's nothing but a shiver
Of light

But when a red man leaves the earth
He never forgets rivers
White with a new year
Deer dancing through scrub oaks
The hawk
Shaking the sky with its shriek
And the man often drifts down
To breathe the air of the living
To touch stone
Touch water

Crouched at the firepit
Of an abandoned camp in the hills
With my thumb I polished
The obsidian knife I'd found
Something moved through the pines
Almost like wind
It touched my hair
Then ran downhill to drink at the stream
If it wasn't the spirit of a man
It was at least a spirit of silence
We have lost

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I want to move
Quietly on this earth
Touching stones
The trunks of trees
The moons on ponds at night
Touching hair and touching flesh
Almost like wind
And when I die
I won't be ready for stars
They'll have to bury me

Oraibi

Oraibi is the oldest continuously inhabited town in America.

The long cobalt sky
Patches of thin cloud
That would darken and build rain
For a song

Climbing Third Mesa
Sage clumps move closer to each other
The rocks take on weight

North of the highway
From red earth
A sudden island of sand
White as salt
Then once more the color of the people

On the dirt road into Oraibi
I'm met halfway by a sign
Whites may not enter
Because we cannot obey
Hopi laws
Or our own laws

The town raised
Rock by rock out of the earth

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Holds the shape
Of mesas outlined in the distance
Holds the color
Of the land at its feet
Almost lost
In what surrounds it

It's a town built on silence too
As I pace
The dust on my side of the sign
I hear nothing
But my own scuffles
Someone in there
Must be singing though
Because clouds
Are moving over the mesa
An eagle swoops through them
Guiding them
Stacking them up like stones
For the Hopi
The Peaceful Ones

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HERBERT MORRIS

Fifty-ninth Street

Henry James was enjoying
that success we reject in calling modest,
horse-drawn carriages clattered through the streets,
and snow, when there was snow,
muffled the very rhythm of the city.

The Plaza, or a castle like it,
loomed as the centerpiece in dreams
which Fifty-ninth Street dreamt that year,
wild brush and scrub still to be cleared,
those evenings it was given to
abandoning itself to dreams
of French chateaux, gilt ballrooms, chandeliers,
the great stones lapped by light, a fierce, pure light,
where the moon rose like strangeness in the park,
and the foundations going down to bedrock.

My father, on a train from Cincinnati,
slept with his palm pressed to his cheek,
eleven years crammed in a small valise
swaying on the luggage rack above him,
boy in a thin wool suit with brown tweed knickers,
dreaming those dreams of clearing the uncleared,
dreaming, from the beginning, Fifty-ninth Street,
moonlight, the snow, tomorrow in those streets
each tracking north, pronouncing the same word:
uptown.

Beyond the strangeness of the park,
fields of the-still-to-be-explored,
past the long, crooked arrow, Broadway,
on which the island lay impaled;
where the river, named for a Dutchman
who probed the bay and, dreaming north,
risked openings to self, to north,

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glittered even on moonless nights,
approaches to the bridge had not yet
bitten deep into cliffs lining the river,
nor had the red lighthouse been built
at the point where the span, above, would soar—

all of it salt marsh, forest, squatters' shacks,
men on both shorelines fishing through the ice.

Precisely what the river dreamt
as the fishermen drilled their holes,
deftly let down improvised lines;
as the snow settled in the streets,
carriages plodding north on missions,
from this distance, undetermined;

what the water may have been dreaming
as the moon rose from that dense tangle
of self and strangeness called the park;
as the express from Cincinnati
kept to its schedule through the night,
one has no way, of course, of knowing.

My father, on the night coach from Ohio,
stirred in the dark and looked to his valise.

Somewhere, evenings, not far from Fifty-ninth Street,
slowly setting those traps in which the novel
later would find itself for all time snared,
James was advancing on that complication
of discipline and passion we call art,
advancing on the strangeness of the park
which, in the dark, is one's own strangeness, too,
that wilderness of motives, anguish, vision,
false starts, wrong turns, that dream of the uncleared,
those boundaries of the unnamed, unexplored,
my father, as a boy, named Fifty-ninth Street,
probes of the coast, openings to the north,
estuary farther than Albany
where the river dreams what a river dreams
before the bridge throws its shadow across it.

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MARVIN MUDRICK

Pushkin in English

ENGLISH-SPEAKING READERS have long heard rumors about a Russian poet who wrote Byronic poems with hollow-eyed Byronic heroes stalking through them, also lived recklessly and died young like Byron, and whom the Russians expect us to take as a dramatic and lyric poet on the level of Shakespeare! a century or more after we have stopped taking Byron himself very seriously. So, hoping to solve the puzzle quickly, we look up some of Pushkin's shorter poems in the available translations:

> Alas! where'er my gaze I cast
> —everywhere whips, everywhere irons;
> the perilous disgrace of laws,
> the helpless tears of servitude.
> Unrighteous Power everywhere
> in condensed fog of prejudices
> has been enthroned—the awesome Genius
> of slavery, and fame's fatal passion.

This is a representative stanza from Vladimir Nabokov's translation of "Liberty: An Ode"—done according to Nabokov's literalist prescription, "with the iambic tetrameter preserved, but with the rhymes sacrificed to literal sense." The poem is reminiscent, at any rate in Nabokov's English, of "Sonnet on Chillon," in which Byron addresses the "Eternal Spirit of the chainless mind . . . Liberty": "And when thy sons to fetters are consigned—/To fetters, and the damp vault's dayless gloom . . ."[1] (the abolitionist rhetoric must have been in the air of the time, because the two poems were written within a year of each other—"Chillon" in 1816, "Liberty" in 1817—and Pushkin hadn't yet read any Byron at all). Nabokov says that the Liberty ode is Pushkin's "first great work," and what a blessing he lets us know, since how would we ever guess from the banal images and mechanical syntax of its

[1] There is an alternative reading of the second line in a manuscript, doubtfully attributed to Byron, in the British Museum: "To tar and fetters, and the damp vault's gloom."

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"literal sense"? The stanza is equally representative of Nabokov's other translations of the shorter poems, all glumly poetic, many of which he quotes, in his brilliant and painstakingly informative monograph on Pushkin,[2] to unmask the criminal incompetence of everybody else's Englishings of Pushkin; but his own aren't notably better at dispelling the condensed fog wherein this awesome Genius of the steppes, imperiled by (alas!) unrighteous Power, solicits and enthrones fame's fatal passion. Nor is the English language unique in its lack of hospitality to Pushkin: Flaubert, having scratched his head over a French version, remarked to Turgenev, "Il est plat, votre poète"—which means, "He certainly isn't the whole wide world's plate of *zakuska*, this parochial delusion of yours."

One might begin to hypothesize that, after all, translations—of poetry anyhow—are unreliable, unbearable, and unusable; but of course Pushkin used them with prodigal indiscriminateness as sources and inspirations, and gratefully dubbed translators "the post horses of enlightenment": what they brought him was the mind of Europe—they brought for example Byron, Napoleonic conqueror of nineteenth-century Continental poetry, whom (having no English) Pushkin was obliged to make out through the only medium available to him, a hack translation into French prose,[3] and if this hasty trot hadn't turned up in the nick of time at his remote posting station, he would have become a very different poet from the one the Russians are mad about. On the other hand, Pushkin's availability in English has electrified no writers whatever and very few readers.

And no critics either: even the most intelligent of them, bilingual and authoritative, lapse into prettiness and phrase-making when they try to describe what the translator has the task of carrying over from Pushkin's Russian. Nabokov, for instance, rhapsodizes on the theme of "Pushkin's genius for extracting meaningful and noble

[2] Disguised as a multi-volumed commentary on his translation of *Eugene Onegin*: Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin,* Translated from the Russian, with a Commentary, by Vladimir Nabokov (New York, 1964). In Four Volumes.

[3] Nabokov: ". . . in Pushkin's day Russian writers knew the literatures of England, Germany, and Italy, as well as the works of the ancients, not from original texts but from the stupendous exertions of French paraphrasts. . . . By 1820, eager Russian readers had already at their disposal the first four volumes of Pichot's and de Salle's first edition (1819) of Byron's works in French, and it is in these prose versions, pale and distorted shadows of the original, that Pushkin read for the first time . . . *Le Corsaire, Manfred,* and the first two cantos of *Le Pelerinage de Childe-Harold.* . . . Pichot not only made no attempt to be accurate, but methodically transposed the text into the most hackneyed, and thus most 'readable,' French of the previous age." Ibid., II, pp. 158–9.

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music out of the most trivial words; in fact, it is exactly the contrast between their humdrum, subservient nature and the sonorities they develop within the acoustical paradise of Pushkin's tetrameter that produces the impression [if not the reality?] of noble sense." Prince Mirsky, straining just as hard to extract noble music out of the most trivial words, is just as anticlimactic:

> . . . there is in Pushkin . . . an element . . . which I do not know what other name to give than perfection. . . . Pushkin's perfection is classical, for it is composed of precision and harmony. His diction is always precise and entirely exempt from all looseness and vagueness. If, for instance, he gives a woman's kisses the epithet of "incisive," he means to say that she bites when she kisses; if he makes a Circassian sleep under a "wet cloak" he is prepared to explain that, though wet, it is quite comfortable to sleep in, because being waterproof it is wet only on the outside. It is doubtful if poetry ever approached to precision of verse more than in the work of Pushkin. But precision alone does not constitute Pushkin's perfection. Its most essential element is *harmony,* by which I mean firstly a sound-pattern in which the poet answers for every single vowel and consonant, pause and intonation, each of them playing its indispensable part in the effect of the whole; and secondly a harmony of sense—a complete adequacy and consistency of the overtones and associations of all the sense elements of a given phrase, passage or poem. . . .[4]

"Il est plat, votre poète." The best that Nabokov and Mirsky can come up with is a list of qualities—noble music, harmony, perfection, the impression of noble sense—which generate the impression of infracritical hot air, and which prove to be the very qualities unrepresented in the available translations. Pushkin's verse is a challenge or a mirage for translators, it must be so unreasonably difficult for them that they can't resist laboring away at it to the limit of our patience and without useful results. ("Difficult!" exclaimed Dr. Johnson, when he was told that the musical performance he had just suffered through was very difficult for the performer; "I wish it were impossible!")

Pushkin's verse doesn't travel well. His prose, though, is something else again, and the translators are evidently incapable of getting in its way. It's the most beautiful prose in the world. There is in it (as Mirsky might have said) an element which I do not know what other name to give than perfection. It's accommodating, alert,

[4] Prince Mirsky, "Introduction" to *Russian Poems,* translated with Notes by C. Fillingham Coxwell (London, 1929), p. 19.

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lithe, precise, incisive, classical, harmonious, nobly musical, the marriage of wit and passion, not merely the impression but the substance of noble sense,[5] a perpetual fountain of high spirits, and withal so perfectly free and unpretentious that to the blurred eye of custom it might look narrow and bare.

The narrator of *The Captain's Daughter* is a young officer named Grinyov, serving in a remote fortress during the time of the rebellion by the Cossack pretender to the throne, Pugachov. The routine of the fortress is so domestic and unmilitary (the first five chapters are devoted to establishing our sense of it) that, when Pugachov mounts a siege, the fatherly old Captain exhorts his garrison as if they were children in a game; but he knows perfectly well what the end will be, having had his brisk and loving farewell with his wife and daughter moments before he marches out to confront the rebels:

> "Well, lads," the Commandant said, "now open the gates, beat the drum. Forward, lads; come out, follow me!"
>
> The Commandant, Ivan Ignatyich, and I were instantly beyond the rampart; but the garrison lost their nerve and did not move.
>
> "Why do you stand still, children?" Ivan Kuzmich shouted. "If we must die, we must—it's all in the day's work!"
>
> At that moment the rebels rushed upon us and burst into the fortress. The drum stopped; the soldiers threw down their rifles; I was knocked down, but got up again and entered the fortress together with the rebels. The Commandant, wounded in the head, was surrounded by the villains, who demanded the keys; I rushed to his assistance; several burly Cossacks seized me and bound me with their belts, saying: "You'll see what'll happen to you, you enemies of the Czar!"

It doesn't sound like Homer or Shakespeare, this threat to an empire in the image of a scuffle at a tiny outpost. Because it's a family matter: Grinyov since his arrival has been treated like a son by the good-hearted old Commandant; he is in love with the Commandant's daughter; here in the square, as he watches, the Commandant refuses to acknowledge "the Czar" ("you are a thief and an impostor, let me tell you!") and is "dragged to the gallows. The

[5] "Precision and brevity are the most important qualities of prose. It demands ideas—and then more ideas; without them glittering phrases serve no purpose. Poetry is another matter (although it wouldn't hurt our poets to have a sum of ideas rather more significant than is usually the case with them. Our literature will not move far ahead on reminiscences of past youth)." Carl R. Proffer (ed.), *The Critical Prose of Alexander Pushkin* (Bloomington, 1969), p. 19.

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old Bashkir, whom we had questioned the night before, was sitting astride the cross-beam. He was holding a rope and a minute later I saw poor Ivan Kuzmich swing in the air." The Commandant's wife, Vasilisa Yegorovna, is an energetic, bossy, sensible, affectionate woman, never at a loss for words and advice, reassuringly in control of her husband and her household, the inviolate old mother; now, suddenly and unthinkably,

> . . . a woman's cry was heard. Several brigands had dragged Vasilisa Yegorovna, naked and disheveled, onto the steps. One of them had already donned her coat. Others were carrying featherbeds, boxes, crockery, linen, and all sorts of household goods.
>
> "My dears, let me go!" the poor old woman cried. "Have mercy, let me go to Ivan Kuzmich!"
>
> Suddenly she saw the gallows and recognized her husband.
>
> "Villains!" she cried in a frenzy. "What have you done to him! Ivan Kuzmich, light of my eyes, soldier brave and bold! You came to no harm from Prussian swords, or from Turkish guns; you laid down your life not in a fair combat, but perished from a runaway thief!"
>
> "Silence the old witch!" said Pugachov.
>
> A young Cossack hit her on the head with his saber and she fell dead on the steps. Pugachov rode away; the people rushed after him.

Grinyov never stops to express his feelings about their deaths, events move too rapidly, he is too busy trying to rescue his beloved and dealing with the savage, sly, and magnetic rebel leader; but hours later, summoned by Pugachov, he passes the death scene: "The gallows, with its victims, loomed menacingly in the dark. Poor Vasilisa Yegorovna's body was still lying at the bottom of the steps, where two Cossacks were mounting guard." The next morning, waiting in the square for Pugachov to appear, he has a final look at "the gallows, where the victims of the day before were still hanging. . . . I searched with my eyes for Vasilisa Yegorovna's body. It had been moved a little to one side and covered with a piece of matting. At last Pugachov appeared in the doorway. . . ." Grinyov's eyes seek out the bodies as the tongue seeks out spaces left by pulled teeth: they were there, and now where are they? The mystery of death and transience dominates the square, into which new life keeps pouring nevertheless.

The translation is, mostly, by Natalie Duddington.[6] I have replaced Duddington's vulgarism "poor old lady" with Gillon R.

[6] Pushkin, *The Captain's Daughter and Other Stories* (New York, 1936).

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Aitken's[7] "poor old woman" (no doubt correctly rendered from the original); Duddington's solecism "astride on the cross-beam" with Aitken's "astride the cross-beam"; Duddington's nonsensical "ran up to us and rushed into the fortress" with Aitken's "rushed upon us and burst into the fortress"; Duddington's "walked into" with Aitken's "entered"; Duddington's mincing British "You will catch it presently" (spoken by the Cossack rebels) with Aitken's likelier "You'll see what'll happen to you." Otherwise Aitken's English tends to be fussier and less idiomatic: "in a twinkling" for "instantly," "hurled to the ground" for "knocked down," "Quieten the old witch!" for "Silence the old witch!"; but it's the same village square in the same clear and present light of terrible violations, nothing in Duddington or Aitken can throw it out of focus. The diction, considered from the standpoint of either imperfect translation, seems basic and exact enough to bypass altogether the problems of translation. The action down to its elements is unmistakable, and even mistakes don't seem to matter: "in a twinkling" is so jarringly wrong for *The Captain's Daughter* that it can't weaken the briefest passage, it reads like a misprint; whereas it is just the sort of phrase we are led to expect in every third tetrameter of "the first complete English translation of the first Russian masterpiece in the narrative genre," *Ruslan and Liudmila:*

> But reader! What about our maiden?
> Let's leave the horsemen for the nonce;
> We'll soon be back there, but before,
> It's more than time now to be turning
> To the fair prisoner and learning
> Her fate with dreaded Chernomor.[8]

Ruslan and Liudmila is the poem that prompted Vasily Zhukovsky, the most celebrated Russian poet of the time, to proclaim young Pushkin's poetic supremacy. According to Mirsky, *Ruslan* "is pure play, like the classical ballet." In Walter Arndt's translation, however, it is sprightly rather than high-spirited, jocose rather than witty, often coy: a protracted skit that is neither romance nor

[7] *The Complete Prose Tales of Alexandr Sergeyevitch Pushkin* (New York, 1966).

[8] RUSLAN AND LIUDMILA, by *Alexander Pushkin*. Translated by *Walter Arndt*. Ardis. $8.95.

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folktale nor—like Chaucer's *Tale of Sir Thopas*—an amusing takeoff on both. It won't make any English or American converts.

It was completed shortly before Pushkin read Byron (in Pichot's French prose) for the first time. Of the narrative poems that followed, *The Gypsies* is (says Mirsky) "Pushkin's first attempt at tragedy, and one of his greatest. . . . It is too easy to philosophize about *The Gypsies*—the most temptingly universal imaginative work in the Russian language." Perhaps. Aleko, the hero, is a disillusioned young cosmopolite who returns to nature among the simple and unspoiled Gypsies, takes up with a Gypsy girl, accepts the job of keeper of the dancing bear, and lives in idyllic happiness till the girl sings a Gypsy love-song and takes up with one of the locals. Aleko has the customary unexplicit and unspeakable past of the Byronic hero: "Why does the young man's heart shudder in his bosom? what secret weariness torments him?"[9] Pushkin never tells us, as Byron never tells us what's (somewhat incoherently) bothering the Corsair:

> Mark—how that lone and blighted bosom sears
> The scathing thought of execrated years!
> Behold—but who hath seen, or e'er shall see,
> Man as himself—the secret spirit free?

On March 5, 1814 Jane Austen, unscathed and execrably provincial, wrote to her sister: "Do not be angry with me for beginning another Letter to you. I have read the Corsair, mended my petticoat, & have nothing else to do." Despite such skeptics, it was the Age of the Blighted Bosom. *The Corsair* had been published on February 1, 1814, and 10,000 copies were sold—maybe one of them to Jane Austen!—on the first day of publication. Many a secret heart must have shuddered in unison with the Byronic hero's best-selling acid indigestion, which, as soon as he discovered it in Pichot, Pushkin fell for enthusiastically.

Aleko is a derivative of the Corsair and Childe Harold and Manfred—the Byronic nocturnal avatar exuding its own circumambience—accessible to Pushkin as early as 1820. By 1823, having read Pichot's first five cantos of *Don Juan* ("What a marvel!" he

[9] The only translation I have found of *The Gypsies* is Prosper Mérimée's into French prose, from which I translate Pushkin's Byronic mystagogy back into the language of the poet from whom Pushkin borrowed it by way of the medium of Pichot's French prose.

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wrote to a friend, and called it Byron's masterpiece), Pushkin conceived the promising idea of crossing the two Byronic strains in a single work: How, that is, would Childe Harold stand up to the brittle brightness of *Don Juan?* and *Eugene Onegin* is intended as the answer. In the first two chapters of *Onegin,* though, Pushkin seems uncertain and a bit amateurish, he has trouble sustaining without fatuity the *Don Juan* manner of worldly-wise chitchat, and still more trouble trying to establish Eugene's importance by means of unsupported assertion—his "somber epigrams," his "unexpected epigrams," his "genius" in the art of love—when in fact all that Pushkin has him think or do (he finds nothing for him to *say* till Chapter Three) causes him to appear a dull and ill-tempered fop.

At the beginning of *Onegin* Pushkin isn't quite Byron but he isn't Pushkin yet either: his aim is to have the use of more of himself, to put together a characteristic and effective persona out of the materials of his personality; and *Onegin* is the work, his first work of large ambition, in which he gives himself the room for his grand and deliberate attempt. By Chapter Three he is learning to assimilate the *Don Juan* manner to his own livelier and more sympathetic worldliness, which, a quality of his prose as far back as his earliest letters, now for the first time makes itself at home in his verse. Besides he is learning to exercise his talent for fiction, not just his knack for stock romantic figures and conjunctions: the story itself rather than the theme it proposes or the way of telling it or the hero it glorifies comes to dominate, un-Byronically, this long poem ("A Novel in Verse" is Pushkin's subtitle), so that (1) Eugene's masquerade-ball gloom and boredom soon become less important than his involvements with others, and (2) the English-speaking reader, reading the poem, can ignore the verse, which in the available translations isn't anything like an acoustical paradise or a model of semantic economy but at least subordinates itself to the absorbing skills and satisfactions of the plot. Finally, at the moment when Tatyana appears on the scene, the reader in any language whatever begins to understand that he is about to be carried along on the tide of a great and original work of fiction.

Creating Tatyana, Pushkin must have been thinking of Byron's Haidée, as uncontaminated by books as Tatyana is bookish. Are books a drag if not worse? Byron, having filed away his latest royalty statement, enjoins his armies of readers to discover in Haidée's (and Don Juan's) illiteracy the virtuous charm against the vice of reading:

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What was it made them thus exempt from care?
Young innate feelings all have felt below,
Which perish in the rest, but in them were
Inherent; what we mortals call romantic,
And always envy, though we deem it frantic.

This is in others a factitious state,
An opium dream of too much youth and reading,
But was in them their nature or their fate:
No novels e'er had set their young hearts bleeding,
For Haidée's knowledge was by no means great,
And Juan was a boy of saintly breeding;
So that there was no reason for their loves
More than for those of nightingales or doves.

(the writing is as slapdash as it usually is even at Byron's best: the general chaos of the "argument"; "what we mortals call romantic"—what do the *im*mortals call it?—and the silly rhyme "romantic"/"frantic"; "hearts bleeding" for a rhyme; the howler of an unintended *double-entendre,* "below," in a context in which the poet needs to avoid localizing the lovers' dovelike love): if you'd like to blight a bosom, says Byron, books will do it every time; whereas Pushkin, unintimidated by books, lovingly describes Tatyana's passionate and dangerous innocence in its relations with all the romantic novels a girl of her time and temperament and social place would have been reading since puberty:

With what attention does she now
read some delicious novel,
with what vivid enchantment
imbibe the ravishing illusion!
Creations by the happy power
of dreaming animated,
the lover of Julie Wolmar,
Malek-Adhel, and de Linar,
and Werther, restless martyr,
and the inimitable Grandison,
who brings upon *us* somnolence—
all for the tender, dreamy girl

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have been invested with a single image,
have in Onegin merged alone.[10]

The characters learn who they are from books. Tatyana learns from her ladies'-library of novels the straightforwardness of passion. Lensky learns from Schiller the exaltation of self-sacrifice. Eugene learns from Byron to distrust straightforwardness and exaltation, and so to precipitate first a tragedy of love and then a tragedy of friendship and, in the astonishing conclusion, a reprise and reversal of the same tragedy of love. Nothing—including the fatal duel—would happen if it weren't for the rules prescribed by books; and everything (once Pushkin hits his stride) is pristine, spontaneous, wilful, explosive: the plot is as symmetrical as a bomb. Even the rather too chummy auctorial voice, which Pushkin borrows from *Don Juan,* can modulate into a dreamlike personal poignance halfway between art and life, as for example directly after Eugene has killed Lensky in the duel (and even Nabokov's—and Pushkin's?—diction purges itself of ash and redundancy):

In due time I shall give you an account
in detail about everything.

But not now. Though with all my heart
I love my hero;
though I'll return to him, of course;
but now I am not in the mood for him.

Pushkin, who has already spent six years on the poem (he will spend two more before completing it), pauses, at the instant of Lensky's death, to memorialize the end of his own youth:

Can it be true that really and indeed,

[10] I am using Nabokov's translation because so far as I have checked nobody who reviewed it, favorably or unfavorably, denied Nabokov's contention that it is the closest of any to a dependable word-for-word crib. Edmund Wilson's review (*The New York Review of Books,* IV:12, July 15, 1965, pp. 3-6) provoked Nabokov's imperially irritated rejoinder, first printed in *The New York Review of Books,* V:2, August 26, 1965, pp. 25-26, and later, amplified, as "Reply to my Critics," in *Nabokov's Congeries* (New York, 1968), pp. 300-324. Wilson is right about the numerous and disfiguring perversities of diction and syntax in Nabokov's translation, and all the ingenious perversities of Nabokov's rejoinder won't conjure them away. Nonetheless, losing the battle, Nabokov sinks quite a few barbs into his pontifical and surprisingly incautious opponent; and his unfailing impoliteness gets to be very funny.

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without elegiac conceits,
the springtime of my days is fled
(as I in jest kept saying hitherto),
and has it truly no return?
Can it be true that I'll be thirty soon?

So! My noontime is come, and this
I must, I see, admit.
But, anyway, as friends let's part,
O my light youth! . . .

His mentor Byron could never have spoken with so pure and literary a pang.

Pushkin's great burst of poetic productivity occurred during and just following his eight-year preoccupation with *Onegin,* and it would be a pleasure to state that his other verse of this period is as attractive and nonpareil in English as *Onegin;* but no such luck. *Boris Godunov* (which however made a serviceable libretto for Musorgsky's opera) is one of those obligatory oversized blank-verse historical neo-Shakespearean dramas, turkeys all, that the Romantic poets—e.g. Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley in England—hatched out one per poet in token of their succession from the Bard. The folktales in verse are something of a reversion to *Ruslan:* the reader keeps hoping they will turn out extravagant and shrewd and hilarious (like one of the comic *Canterbury Tales,* say *The Miller's* or *The Friar's Tale*), but they seem slick and complacent instead. The *Little Tragedies* are obvious and—despite their brevity—tedious thesis plays: *The Covetous Knight* warns against avarice (in the opening scene of *Volpone* Jonson shows how such a thesis might be made to come alive); *Mozart and Salieri* contrasts lavish, heedless genius and laborious, vindictive talent; *The Stone Guest* is a lethargic reduction of the Don Juan legend, having neither the wit and energy of da Ponte's version nor the intractable iconoclasm of Molière's; *A Feast in Time of Plague* is death's-head Gothic melodrama (anticipating Poe, and not in the same league with Chaucer's tremendous parable of the Plague, *The Pardoner's Tale*). *The Bronze Horseman* has an impressive allegorical idea and fine descriptions of Peter the Great and St. Petersburg; but the much-admired image of the really and truly galloping equestrian statue isn't hallucinatory enough to frighten anybody except the deranged young

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man who imagines he's being hunted down, and the young man's proletarian pathos is the sort of thing that will soon be done better in prose fiction, and from the inside, by Pushkin's protégé, Gogol.

Pushkin's own prose fiction came late in his short life; but it was immediately absolute and inimitable, nothing like Gogol's after or anybody else's before. *The Captain's Daughter* is the last, longest (though still only of novella length), and crowning work, full of the delights of being young, masculine, susceptible to wine, women, and gambling, sentimental, impulsive, and thoughtlessly brave; full of incidents and—like the dream Grinyov has of the bearded peasant with the ax—marvels; written in the clear-water prose that Pushkin turned out as naturally and unstintingly as if it were impossible to tell a lie. *The Queen of Spades* is almost equally wonderful, more limited in its intentions and more compact, a genuine horror story (unlike the theatrics of *A Feast in Time of Plague*):

> The clock struck one, then two; and he heard the distant rumbling of carriage wheels. In spite of himself, excitement seized him. The carriage drew near and stopped. He heard the sound of the carriage step being let down. All was bustle within the house. The servants were running hither and thither, voices were heard, and the house was lit up. Three antiquated chambermaids entered the bedroom, and they were shortly afterwards followed by the Countess who, more dead than alive, sank into an armchair. Hermann peeped through a chink. Lizaveta Ivanovna passed close by him, and he heard her hurried steps as she hastened up her staircase. For a moment his heart was assailed by something like remorse, but the emotion was only transitory. He stood petrified.
>
> The Countess began to undress before her looking glass. Her cap, decorated with roses, was unpinned, and then her powdered wig was removed from off her white and closely cropped head. Hairpins fell in showers around her. Her yellow satin dress, embroidered with silver, fell down at her swollen feet.
>
> Hermann witnessed the repulsive mysteries of her toilette; at last the Countess was in her nightcap and nightgown, and in this costume, more suitable to her age, she appeared less hideous and terrifying.
>
> Like all old people in general, the Countess suffered from sleeplessness. Having undressed, she seated herself at the window in an armchair and dismissed her maids. The candles were taken away, and once more the room was lit only by the sanctuary lamp. The Countess sat there looking quite yellow, moving her flaccid lips and swaying from side to side. Her dull eyes expressed complete vacancy of mind, and, looking at her, one would have thought that the rocking of her body was not voluntary, but was produced by the action of some concealed galvanic mechanism.

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Suddenly the deathlike face changed incredibly. The lips ceased to move, the eyes became animated: before the Countess stood a stranger.

"Do not be alarmed, for Heaven's sake, do not be alarmed!" said he in a low but distinct voice. "I have no intention of doing you any harm, I have only come to ask a favor of you."

The Tales of Belkin, Pushkin's first attempts at prose fiction (he was thirty-one), are five of the best stories ever written, shapely, lucid, inquiring, generous, straightforwardly and continuously entertaining while the author does inconspicuous virtuoso tricks with narration, suspense, perspective, and point of view: a story about the circumstances of a duel half of which is postponed for many years; about a wedding that Pushkin must have intended to appear predestined, since the coincidences he invents to make it happen have to be called miraculous; about a drunken undertaker who has an appropriate nightmare; about the way of a man with a maid who wins a young gentleman by playing the maid; about a postmaster's daughter who goes to the bad and ends up all the better for it, but starts modestly enough—

. . . Dunya returned with the samovar. The little coquette saw at the second glance the impression she had produced upon me; she lowered her large blue eyes; I began to talk to her; she answered me without the least timidity, like a girl who has seen the world. I offered her father a glass of punch, to Dunya herself I gave a cup of tea, and then the three of us began to converse together, as if we were old acquaintances.

The horses had long been ready, but I felt reluctant to take leave of the postmaster and his daughter. At last I bade them good-bye, the father wished me a pleasant journey, the daughter accompanied me to the coach. In the entry I stopped and asked her permission to kiss her; Dunya consented. . . . I can reckon up a great many kisses

Since first I chose this occupation,

but not one which has left behind such a long, such a pleasant recollection.

That ellipsis following "Dunya consented" is the narrator's, as he savors with undimmed appreciation the memory of the kiss. Pushkin was always grateful to women, and was always after them to have a reason for being grateful, as when, on his journey to the Russo-Turkish battlefront in 1829, he paid a tourist's visit to a Kalmyk tent:

A young Kalmyk girl, quite pretty, was sewing, and smoking tobacco. I

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> sat down beside her. "What's your name?"—***—"How old are you?"—"Ten and eight."—"What are you sewing?"—"Trouser."—"For whom?"—"For self." She handed me her pipe and began to eat. Tea was boiling in the cauldron with mutton fat and salt. She offered me her ladle. I could not refuse and swallowed a mouthful, trying not to take a breath. I do not think that the cuisine of any other people could produce anything more repulsive. I asked for something with which to get rid of the taste. They gave me a small piece of dried mare's meat; I was happy even for that. [After this exploit, I thought I deserved a reward, but my haughty beauty gave me a whack on the head with her balalaika.] Kalmyk coquetry frightened me; I hurried out of the tent—and rode off from the Circe of the Steppes.[11]

Sometimes he was luckier—as when, a friend's letter having brought up the name of a woman Pushkin has been pursuing for years, Pushkin's reply exuberantly tells all:

> Scatterbrain!
> You don't write me anything about the 2100 rubles I owe you, but you write me about Mme. Kern, whom, with God's help, a few days ago I fucked. Here's what I want to know: if you want to receive that sum from *The Moscow Messenger,* find out whether they are in a position to pay me 2100 for the present year, and give me the answer—if not, you will get it from Smirdin in installments. . . .

Pushkin *needed* God's help—God knows he did his best over the years to come to terms with Anna Kern on his own—and he is thankful, but there are other things in the world too: money, professional obligations and arrangements, friendship. In Pushkin's prose there are no barriers and anything can happen, it's a field of force that incites lightninglike strokes from the most unexpected directions; eventually it takes account of all claims, tragic and comic, divine and worldly, not necessarily to the discredit of any, for the world never stops and new events keep breaking in—as in the fictitious square where the old Captain dangles on a rope and Vasilisa Yegorovna lies naked in the dust, so too on Pushkin's journey home from the battlefront, in the actual Caucasus of 1829, where nobody but Pushkin would encounter such a prodigy as Durov:

He was being treated for some exotic disease like catalepsy and he

[11] A JOURNEY TO ARZRUM, by *Alexander Pushkin.* Translated by *Birgitta Ingemanson.* Ardis. $7.95. It is the first English translation. The sentence in square brackets was deleted by Pushkin before publication—maybe he thought it undignified—and doesn't appear in this translation. It is quoted from Henri Troyat, *Pushkin,* Translated from the French by *Nancy Amphoux* (Garden City, 1970), p. 360.

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played cards from morning till night. Finally he lost everything, and I took him to Moscow in my carriage. Durov had a monomania: he absolutely had to have one hundred thousand rubles. He had thought up and rethought all possible ways of getting it. Sometimes on the road at night he would wake me up with the question, "Alexander Sergeevich! Alexander Sergeevich! How do you think I could get one hundred thousand?" Once I told him that if I were in his place and the one hundred thousand was essential for my tranquillity and well-being, I would steal it. "I've thought of that," Durov answered me—"Well, what then?"—"Simple—you can't find one hundred thousand in every man's pocket, and I don't want to knife or rob a man for a trifle—I have a conscience."—"Well, steal a regimental payroll."—"I've thought of that."—"What?"—"It could be done in the summer when the regiment is in camp and the wagon with the payroll stands by the regimental commander's quarters. You could throw a long rope over the wagon tongue and hitch a horse to it from a distance and then gallop off on it; seeing the wagon galloping without horses the sentry would probably be afraid and not know what to do; two or three versts away you could break open the wagon and escape with the payroll. But there are a lot of obstacles in this too. Don't you know any other way?"—"Ask the sovereign for money."—"I've thought of that."—"Well?"—"I even asked."—"What? Without any right?"—"That's what I began with: your majesty! I have no right to ask you for what would make the happiness of my life; but, your majesty, there is no model for charity, and so forth."—"What did he answer?"—"That's surprising. You should turn to Rothschild."—"I've thought of that."—"Well, how did that plan go?"—"Well, do you see, one way of enticing Rothschild to give one hundred thousand was to write him such a weird and amusing request that afterward he would be happy to tell an anecdote which cost one hundred thousand. But so many difficulties! . . ."[12]

Pushkin's life would have been a martyrdom if he hadn't had such a good time of it. He was one of the rare lighthearted geniuses, like Chaucer, like Mozart as W. J. Turner sums him up:

The old Biblical utterance that the truly virtuous shall be light of heart, if applied to Mozart, would make him out to be one of the most virtuous of men, for his natural buoyancy and gaiety of heart were quite extraordinary. It was this sheer lightheartedness and vivacity which made him do rash things and involve himself in difficulties and responsibilities which his more cautious father would have avoided. After all, a man is not a man of genius for nothing. Men of such genius as Mozart's must be conscious of it. It must be an exhilarating element in their lives to a dègree of which we can hardly conceive. It may amount, indeed, to

[12] Proffer, op. cit., pp. 242-3.

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> what we might call an intoxication of the spirit to which lesser men can only aspire through being in love or in drink.[13]

But Turner can't mean that this grace is characteristic of all geniuses, for many of whom the power is as burdensome as it was exhilarating for Mozart or for Pushkin—"the only one of those nineteenth-century Russians who wasn't a turd," observed an admirer of his whom I had told I was doing a piece on Pushkin, and who doesn't take to the nagging and bullying, the dissatisfactions, the *gracelessness* of the pandemic apocalypticism culminating in Dostoevsky and Tolstoy.

Pushkin had no complaints, he had a zest for both the idiosyncratic and the ordinary, he wanted what life is ready to offer: friends, women, books, conviviality, gossip, jokes, travel, fame, money, and when the time was ripe a wife and children and the comforts of respectability. But the same Mozartian high spirits that gave him the world impelled him out of sheer excess of sensibility to do rash and impractical things, to involve himself in avoidable difficulties and responsibilities, to risk his career and his freedom and often his life. The smallest suspicion of a personal slight was intolerable to him, he formally called out dozens of putative offenders and fought at least three duels before the one in which he was killed at the age of thirty-seven. As early as his 'teens he was friendly with political dissidents many of whom would later take part in the Decembrist uprising and be executed or transported to Siberia; he wrote poems that served as manifestoes for the cause: yet his own sentiments were closer to Edmund Burke than to Robespierre, not revolutionary but anti-autocratic, his aim was—what could be better if only it were practical?—to convert Tsar Alexander, co-founder of the Holy Alliance, to political liberalism. For his pains he spent a half-dozen years banished from the capitals (if he hadn't had very influential friends, he would have ended in Siberia); and even when, upon the accession of Nicholas, he was officially restored to favor, he remained for the rest of his life under the surveillance of the secret police and the still more constraining supervision of the Tsar. In the last six years of his life, he was slowly driven to the wall by obligations he had accepted with confidence and now gallantly attempted to manage: a literary and financial dependence on the Tsar, who personally censored his work and treated him as if he were a Court flunky or a political prisoner; an expensive, childish, shallow, imprudent society belle

[13] W. J. Turner, *Mozart* (London, 1965), p. 15.

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of a wife whom he couldn't afford, or enjoy, or win over, or—at the innumerable Court balls to which she insisted he accompany her—keep from flirting scandalously with the man he called out for his last duel as well as with the Tsar himself.

Meanwhile he continued to write (e.g. *The Captain's Daughter*; but during those last years he had just about given up verse), his mountain of debts grew steadily, he was hemmed in by the stupid and brutal government (which never permitted him to leave the country), and he had no recourse but to hope to make money out of a journal he was putting together, with his usual ebullient energy, in the face of the stupid and brutal censorship:

> You [Pletnev, Pushkin's literary agent] have received the *Journey* [*to Arzrum*] from the censorship, but what did the committee decide with regard to my most humble petition? The little ass Nikitenko won't kick and the bull Dunduk butt me to death, will they? They won't get rid of me so easily, though. My thanks, my great thanks to Gogol for his "Calash"; the almanac can travel a long way in it. However, my opinion is this: don't accept "The Calash" for nothing, but set a price for it; Gogol needs money. You ask a name for the almanac: let's call it Arion or Orion. I love names which don't make any sense; there's nothing for jokes to stick to. Have Langer also sketch a vignette without any sense. There should be some little flowers, and lyres, and chalices, and ivy, as in Alexander Ivanovich's apartment in Gogol's comedy [*Vladimir, Third Class*]. That will seem very natural. I would be glad to come to you in November; all the more that I've never had such a fruitless autumn in my life. I'm writing, but bungling the job. For inspiration one must have spiritual tranquillity, and I'm not tranquil at all. You're doing badly in becoming indecisive. I have always found that everything which you have devised has succeeded for me. Let's begin the almanac with the *Journey*. Send the proofs along to me, and I'll send you some poems. Who will be our censor? . . .

The strain was becoming too much even for Pushkin, and it broke through in a letter to his wife: "my . . . heart drops into my boots when I recall that I'm a journalist. Though still a decent person, I have received police reprimands, and I have been told, *Vous avez trompé* [You have been deceitful], and such like. What will happen to me now? Mordvinov will look on me as he does on Faddey Bulgarin and Nikolay Polevoy—as a spy. The devil prompted my being born in Russia with a soul and with talent! . . ."

He is one of the great writers of the world, one of the heroes of literature, one of the great spirits of history. The Anglo-Saxons are benighted for not knowing him.

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PHILIP MURRAY

Night Journeys

Angel

There must have been others like me.
But we can not be said to have travelled together.
Now and again I heard suggestive laughter,
Suppressed cries, the kind implying joy.
Winds, wings, delicate, indelicate shudderings;
Who gave me those susurrous feathery kisses?
Nothing had prepared me for such a rapturous white.
(I would have said "blank" before the event.)
Visible, voluptuous compound of height and light,
A white like . . . but Azrael will show you.

Album

An album of sky, vast but uncomplicated;
What I painted there was mine to keep;
Figures in a garden, animals in a glade,
A few vague forms—one does not vie with God.
More than enough space for a night time's work.
(One manuscript reads "life time's work.")
No signature is required other than HUMAN.

Ultima Thule

The border is unmarked, unguarded, bare;
One might easily wander across unaware.
The blue and silver lines of Here
Have meshed, suddenly, into There.
Although when one begins to compare,
One is struck by currents of chill in the air

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Which hurry one on, as though one were going somewhere.
One needs the hot blood of a stallion not to care,
The sang-froid of an iceberg not to fear
The remorseless tundra razing the tropical years.

Speech

The leaves as they fell,
The leaves as they fall,
The twigs as they broke,
The twigs as they break,
Spoke,
Speak,
Les adieux, les adieux,
Smiles in the smoke,
Flutes in the flame.
No age. No country. No name.

Arrivals

Across the river voices were singing;
They grew fainter as I approached,
Though I was not in any sense an intruder.
I was greeted by that barely visible host;
My arrival seemed to revive everyone briefly.
I almost distinguished a face or two in the crowd
Before I began to fade myself, and the singing
Commenced again. There was a distinct new shadow
Crossing the water. I too began singing,
Fainter and fainter to a welcoming silence.

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JAMES WRIGHT

Hook

I was only a young man
In those days. On that evening
The cold was so God damned
Bitter there was nothing.
Nothing. I was in trouble
With a woman, and there was
Nothing there but
Me and dead snow.

I stood on the streetcorner
In Minneapolis, lashed
This way and that.
Wind rose from some pit,
Hunting me.
Another bus to Saint Paul
Would arrive in three hours,
If I was lucky.
Oh, I am plenty lucky.

Then the young Sioux
Loomed beside me, his scars
Were just my age.

Ain't got no bus here
A long time, he said.
You got enough money
To get home on?

What did they do
To your hand? I answered.
He raised up his hook into the terrible starlight
And slashed the wind.

Oh, that? he said.
I had a bad time with a woman. Here,
You take this.

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Did you ever feel a man hold
Sixty-five cents
In a hook,
And place it
Gently
In your freezing hand?

I took it.
It wasn't the money I needed.
But I took it.

STEPHEN SCHMIDT

March

One red berry remains
deep in the thorns
bobbing in the last
red light of dusk.

Up in the north field
the cows once again
are free.
How uneasily
they tread the still-hard ground
their thin legs
almost folding under.

But look at the berry—
so quiet in itself—

remaining.

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SAMUEL HAZO

To Dive

The bed you ride on rides
the deck that rides the waves.
Porthole breezes cool your pillow.
Icewater in a pitcher tilts
to the ship's pitch, roll
and yaw.
Above you on the dance
floor, an orchestra completes
its sambas.
Stomping down the hall
in showerclogs, a boy whistles
the Cuban national anthem
flat until his mother quiets
him in Arabic.
Then, midnight.
Coffee, peppercorns and copra
ripen in the hold.
Brine
swills where the ship's halves
fuse into the keel, and underneath
the keel a manta plunges
like a bomber's shadow through
a cloud of smelt.
Floating
on your sheeted raft, you dream
a dive through halls and holds
and hulls . . .
You surface breathless
to the naked bride you've loved
a thousand times before.
Icily,
your bedside pitcher glimmers
amber with the fire of your skins.

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Your bodies speak the braille
that bodies speak.
Touch
by touch, you grip and grapple
for the first time, again.

DAVID WAGONER

For Patt, Whispering to a Burro

One arm around his neck, she whispers
Into his unpromising, uncompromising ear
What I may never discover:
In the middle of a field, she tells him
What they have always remembered,
Something as nameless as the calmest day
Ever to drift through fences,
Something they lost once
In the swelter of hard mountains,
In the blizzards drifting
Over the gold-burdened rivers,
Something they may never find
Again but will always search for:
Not magic words spell-breaking or -binding
But the first spell itself, the enduring
Dream between her lips and his ear,
As round-eyed, as constant,
As sure as they stand together.

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ROBERT NYE

59^{x}: A True Tale

My friend Arthur Dodwell, a man who notices such things, drew my attention a week or so ago to a catalogue of 17th- and 18th-century books in English and French coming up for sale at Dowell's, the auctioneer's, in George Street, Edinburgh. The chief attraction in this catalogue—advertised, indeed, on its front cover, was a Ben Jonson folio containing besides Jonson's translation of Horace's *Art of Poetry,* a number of his masques and his superb collections of original poems "Timber" and "Underwoods." This excited me—but my friend Arthur yawned, and then pointed to Lot 91: *Candide, ou L'Optimisme, traduit de l'allemand de M. le Docteur Ralph, 1759.*

Now, as every schoolboy knows, there never was a Doctor Ralph who needed translating from the German or anything else. *Candide* is by Voltaire. It was first published early in 1759. It was a clandestine publication but its author's indelible signature of style betrayed his identity on every page, and by February of that year the authorities in Paris and Geneva were already doing their best to suppress it. They failed. By the end of 1759 sixteen editions had poured from presses here and there, Amsterdam, Geneva, Paris, Rouen, London—and five English translations had also appeared, plus a sixth, undated, but probably 1759 as well.

So, here, as Arthur pointed out, we had an edition of *Candide,* beautifully bound in calf at the time of publication, with a decorated spine, its text perfect, its general condition excellent.

"Interesting," I conceded, "but what's the point of going for just one of *sixteen* first editions? Voltaire had a tricky mind. You know as well as I do that all those 1759 books carefully omitted any indication as to the place of publication or even the identity of the printer. You could buy any of the sixteen and think you had a first—and in a way you would have."

Arthur considered me with that specific pity he reserves for reviewers. "Down on Dowell's shelf is *the* first edition," he said. "It was set up in type at the end of December 1758, by Marc-Michel Rey, and published either by him in Amsterdam, or by Robin in Paris, or through distributors in Rouen or Lyons, or even—and I favour this myself—by Nourse in London, who certainly worked from it in preparing the first English translations and so had the privilege of introducing *Candide* to these islands in two languages."

We were strolling down the Mound. The sun shone on the statue of John Knox in the courtyard of New College. Knox, however, was holding up his hand as if he expected rain.

"I will allow," I said, "that in the British Museum catalogue of printed books there is a lovely square bracket against their very first copy of *Candide,* and that it says '?London, 1759.' But how can you be so sure that our *Candide* in George Street is the first of the firsts?"

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"A sneer ago," said Arthur, "you were telling me of Voltaire's tricky mind. Right?"

"Tricky like a fox," I said.

"And you'll know he had a passion for revisions?"

"He was a stylist."

"Very well," said Arthur, taking a fat book from the pocket of his voluminous black coat. "Put up your umbrella and consider this."

This was a volume which I saw was entitled *Voltaire and Candide, a Study in the Fusion of History, Art, and Philosophy;* with the text of the La Vallière manuscript of *Candide,* by Ira O. Wade, published by Princeton University Press, in 1959. As for the umbrella—Knox had been right. We sat down on the steps of the Scottish National Gallery and propped the umbrella between us as I turned pages.

"Professor Wade," Arthur said, lighting his pipe with an old ten shilling note (one of his wee eccentricities, he loves the new 50 pence pieces so much, because as he says it is always such a pleasure when you put your hand in your pocket and your fingers find the sharp edges to know that you are five times richer than you had thought), "Professor Wade, a diligent American gentleman, had access to all the sixteen editions, and to the La Vallière manuscript of *Candide* in the Arsenal Library in Paris, where it had lain unnoticed since the eighteenth century, and—"

"Up the Arsenal," I cried irrelevantly, as some Rangers supporters passed. "What are these things here—fleurons?"

"You're improving," said Arthur. "Pretty, aren't they?" He shifted the umbrella to shield the vignettes of flowers and fruit reproduced in fine facsimile in the tome I now held across my knees. "Now, listen. Our American agent even took the trouble to go to the Institut at Geneva also and confirm that there *are* minute differences between the sixteen editions."

I was beginning to lose interest in the rain. "Go on," I said.

"To cut a long story short," Arthur said, with that severity which I had sometimes noticed in his own critical remarks upon new books, "sit up tonight and burn the midnight oil and to hell with the energy crisis. Read first the facsimile of the La Vallière manuscript which Professor Wade includes. Then, if your eyes are no worse than usual, read from page 195 to page 238. That's chapter 4 of part 3," he explained generously, "in it, by collating the evidence of all sixteen editions, the various cancellations, transpositions, and especially the variations within those fleurons, Professor Wade comes up with proof positive that Voltaire had a small trial edition made—an edition Wade calls 59^{x}."

"Reviewers get too much to read," I said.

"I thought you liked your work?"

"I love it."

"And you'd love it even more if I told you that Dowell's have 59^{x}?"

I couldn't think of anything much to say so I blew my nose and smiled at a pigeon.

"Forget reading a minute," Arthur invited. "Look at the pictures. In the

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vignettes inset in that collection of six pages between pages 238 and 239 in Wade you'll find a reproduction of the title page of the first edition of *Candide*—our friend 59^{x}. Observe the extreme right hand side of the middle of the fleuron." My friend took off his deerstalker hat and handed me the magnifying glass which he keeps in it. My own face has always been the true index of my mind and I must admit that I blushed at the sheer Sherlock Holmesery of this. It seemed especially to be deplored since we were in public view and the statue of Allan Ramsay might even have seen us if he'd turned his head away from that steady contemplation of Australia House which is such a feature of his work in Princes Street. In any case, what Arthur now went on to say could be seen readily enough by the naked eye.

"Extreme right middle. What do you notice?"

"A leaf. Much like the other leaves."

"A leaf attached to the leaf below it?"

"Exactly."

"What is so obliging about that leaf," said Arthur, sucking at his pipe, "is that in all the other editions it has turned into a butterfly."

"You printer's devil," I said.

"I mean that after edition 59^{x} it is no longer attached to the leaf below it. It flies. It flutters. It is separated from the rest."

"Arthur," I said, "no one will ever describe you as having eyes level with your head, and ears not prominent, nor of being of a middling size, and a round, flesh-coloured visage. No one will ever describe you as being five feet five inches high and having a most sweet disposition."

"I understand," said Arthur, "that you are pretty well acquainted with Dr. Johnson's admirable translation of the book we are pursuing, and that you mean to intimate that I am not to be identified with the innocent Candide."

"You remind me more of Deacon Brodie, Dracula, or Mr. Hyde," I said.

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Arthur shrugged modestly. "Cast your eyes now at the end of the rod which runs through the middle of the fleuron on that title page," he invited. "Do you see its extreme right hand end?"

"A sort of squiggle?"

"In other editions it is a perfect knob," said Arthur. "Move your eyes across to the extreme left. You will perhaps perceive a slight fracture in the lower left leaf on that side."

"Yes, I see it."

"Later editions of 1759 repair all these matters."

I pointed my umbrella in the direction of Hanover Street. "Let us arise and go now," I suggested, "and go to Dowell's fast."

"The trouble with you," Arthur said, "is that your mind was raped by Yeats at an age when it should have been reading the small print in bibliographies."

Arrived in the upper room where the 269 lots of books for auction were displayed upon the shelves, my friend Arthur reached down Lot 91 for me, and directed my attention to page 43. "I will not yet burden you with the fascinating textual variants," he promised, "but do you see that wee island in the white space at the bottom of the emblem on that page?"

"It could be Innisfree. Or Cramond."

"My boy," murmured Arthur, "that very thought may have occurred to Voltaire. For that or a better reason, he had it changed by the time of the second edition, where you will find *no island at all,* but two little boat-like blades of grass instead."

I had a swift glance round to see if there were other book-fanciers in earshot. There were, but they were busy with the Ben Jonson folio, and with several volumes of prints, plates and engravings which looked as though they might be suitable for flint-hearted antique dealers to tear apart with their fair bare hands, have framed, and sell to American tourists in the Grassmarket. "Arthur," I hissed, "if what you're saying has more than half a dram of truth in it, then this is definitely, I mean, here in Edinburgh we've found—"

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"Count the wee dots round the shield in the centre of that fleuron," Arthur commanded.

I counted. "Fifteen."

"Voltaire had it changed to twelve for the second run," Arthur said laconically. "Now turn to page 213. Bit of a clincher this."

"But it's the same old island and the 15-dotted shield," I protested.

"In all other editions," explained Arthur patiently, "you will find *another fleuron altogether* on that page. The fleuron, in fact, which appears on pages 146 and 193 in *this* edition, where again all the later fifteen have something else. Your myopic little eyes may also have noticed that the trumpet on both 146 and 193 is a bit squashed-looking. Voltaire had the printer straighten it up before the second edition."

Slowly, I took this precious *Candide* to the window and considered George Street. The pavements were suddenly thronged with ghosts. There was De Quincey dodging his creditors as he flitted towards Holyrood Palace and its well known sanctuary for debtors. There was Robert Louis Stevenson looking at his reflection and thinking about doppelgangers as he stood before the window of Brunton's bookshop. Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon came past, both of them wincing as a car backfired. Lockhart passed with Maria Edgeworth on his arm. Burns was hurrying towards Milne's Bar in company with Dunbar and Hugh MacDiarmid. Walter Scott and Byron were engaged in witty conversation with two policemen who had taken objections to the parking of their carriage. Sir Walter drew a writ. Byron drew a pistol.

Thin rain started to fall, half-snow in the winter light of Edinburgh. The ghosts all vanished. Only the Bank of Scotland looked real. And the spires of St Mary's Cathedral—Barbara and Mary, called after the two sisters who had paid for their building nearly a hundred years ago. I turned back from the past and looked at Arthur, who was pretending to be interested in Lot 240: "U.S. Fish Commission, Propagation & Enquiry of Food Fishes of the United States, Report 1884, Washington 1886."

"Mr. Dodwell," I said, "trumpets and fleurons are all very fine. But it's the words that count."

"Precisely," whispered my friend, running his fingers appreciatively over a set of *The Boy's Own Paper, 1880-81* (Lot 197), and looking everywhere in fact except in the direction of that edition of *Candide* which now appeared to me to be glowing in my right hand like a red-hot poker or a gift from the Angry Brigade. "It's the words that count. And you have to count the words. Or, let's put it this way: you careless writer fellows don't, but the real hard workers, your printing friends, they'll tell you that they have a devil of a job of it when one of your crowd changes his mind or his adjectives just to the extent of a few words in his text. They have to stitch and patch and run on and the Lord knows what. And it's because of the counting of the words that you have these variations in the fleurons. Voltaire liked to revise. He wasn't quite as bad as that bog Irishman you're always on about, James Joyce, but he certainly wanted his mots to be as juste as he could make them, and with a brain like his that was

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pretty juste. Now the revisions he made to this first edition necessitated the moving of typeface, and the swapping of fleurons to accommodate that. As Professor Wade will explain to you—*do* sit up, dear boy, and bruise your brains a bit on his small print the night before the sale—only our first edition, only that 59^{x} you are holding there, has a new paragraph beginning 'Mais il y a une raison' six lines from the top of page 31. The manuscript has it paragraphed thus. But for the second edition, Voltaire ran the sentence into the preceding one, with a semicolon before 'mais' and no paragraphing at all. Similarly, on page 41 you will find 'C'est une nécessité que si un Univers existe, ce soit le meilleur des Univers.' That corresponds with the manuscript also. Later editions change it to the now proverbial 'Tout ceci est ce qu'il y de mieux.' I say, am I boring you?" Arthur concluded hopefully.

"But why did he do it?"

"Pages 84, 103, 125, and 242 will give you further evidence that this is Wade's original 59^{x}, and therefore the first edition of *Candide*," hissed my friend.

"But *why* did Voltaire do it?"

"Page 242 is my favourite," Arthur confessed. "It has this paragraph about Homer and Milton, which Voltaire apparently deleted, according to Gagnebin, in his article 'L'Edition originale de *Candide,*' in the 'Bulletin du bibliophile,' iv, pages 169 to 181, for 1952, because its disparaging reference to German poets might have upset Frederick the Great, whom Voltaire was courting at the time—although I may say your friend Dr Johnson must have had access to a first or second edition, because he keeps the bit in, and in any event our American detective Wade points out that Frederick had a sense of humour and that the Milton paragraph was not actually deleted by the publisher until after the *second* edition, 59^{y}, which in turn could lead one back to thinking Nourse in London the distributor of both 59^{x} and 59^{y} because—"

"*Why did Voltaire do it?*" I demanded. So loudly, I admit, that I almost caused a devoted book-vandal to drop his collection of rippable plates of old Edinburgh.

My friend Arthur looked out of the window. Arthur never sees ghosts. He is not a troubled man. His mind is as clear as mine is cloudy. Traffic wardens were gathering about his Austin 1300 like birds of prey. "I wonder if I might make a mot about an illegally parked car being a carcase for vultures," he mused.

When he turned from the window the sun spilled abruptly over his shoulder and his eyes were filled with good humour. "Francois-Marie Arouet, alias Voltaire, was a complicated, tricky, malicious, mean, great, foul, fair little soul," he murmured. "You will learn in your researches tonight that our admirable American with his critical apparatus declares that 'the one thing to keep in mind is that *Candide* is probably the most clandestine publication in a century of clandestine works.' Yet Voltaire left his clues for us, like the true criminal he was—his dots, his fleurons, his squashed trumpets, the word 'précipitamment' which you will find on

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page 125 and in the manuscript but in no other edition save 59^{v}, which I am on the whole inclined to be sure with Wade is the *second* edition, set up early in 1759, but of course not before the one you are now holding in your ever so slightly trembling hand, my friend, which—and I quote our man Wade again—'must have been set up at the end of December 1758, close enough to the end to warrant the date 1759.' The clandestine, the ambiguous, the furtive, the complex, the element of the maze or Chinese puzzle—you will agree that the very publication of Voltaire's masterpiece is in keeping with the ways of his mind, and its subject matter. One never knows whether to laugh or to cry at poor Candide. The wit is so intense. The humour is so peculiar. The stance so gloriously erect, as though we human worms could stand to attention."

He took that *Candide* from me and put it back on the shelf. Lot 91, Dowell's Sale No 689, 11th March 1974 at 11 a.m.

"Most of that first trial edition, bound in paper covers, would have been read hastily and tossed away when the authorities came down on it. I wonder how many were printed? Wade thinks no more than a thousand. I wonder how many of that thousand found wits worthy of them, wits with wit enough to think them worth binding as lovingly as this?" Arthur ran his fingers down the spine with the single word on it.

"The play," he said, "is the tragedy Man, and its hero, the Conqueror Worm."

"Poe," I said.

"More your cup of blood, eh?" said Arthur. "Now let us go to Mr Gray's coffee shop in Tollcross and drink two cups of his excellent coffee. Leave me the Voltaire, my boy, and I will leave you the Jonson. I like the worms that turn."

We came back to Dowell's on the Monday. I got the Jonson. Arthur got the *Candide*. My Jonson has twenty pages missing but I expect they will turn up soon in Glasgow's Barrowland or somewhere. Arthur thinks not. But then he is no optimist.

Notes on Contributors (cont.)

SAMUEL HAZO's most recent volume of poetry is *Once for the Last Bandit* (University of Pittsburgh, 1972). He is Director of the International Poetry Forum in Pittsburgh, and a Professor of Literature at Duquesne University.

DAVID WAGONER's eighth novel, *Tracker,* was published by Atlantic-Little, Brown, and Indiana University Press will publish his eighth book of poems, *Collected Poems, 1956-1976,* in the Spring.

MARCIA B. SIEGEL's *Please Run on the Playground,* a report and commentary on a movement training program for schoolteachers, was published last summer by the Connecticut Commission on the Arts.

ROGER SALE has delivered his book on the history of Seattle to the University of Washington Press.

DONALD E. STANFORD* is editor of *The Southern Review* and Professor of English at Louisiana State University. He has published two books of poems and edited the comprehensive edition of *The Poems of Edward Taylor* for the Yale University Press. He has recently completed a critical study of Robert Bridges.

Asterisk indicates a new contributor.

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VERNON YOUNG

From Munch to Monkeys, Scandinavia to Spain

SINCE I SHALL BE DELIVERING my last (I hope) testament on the subject of Bergman's *Scenes from a Marriage* in my forthcoming supplement to *Cinema Borealis,* I shall mention the bloody tedious film here mainly to assert that if the New York Film Critics, who chose it as the Best Foreign Film of 1974, had defiantly singled out a *television* movie to honor a medium where creative work is normally disqualified for authentic appraisal because of the cafeteria system whereby it is served, they would have earned a generous measure of respect. Such was not the case. *Scenes from a Marriage,* made for television originally, was thereafter released for *cinema* presentation, which made it eligible for nomination, the more so since it was labelled with the prescription, *"Bergman—To Be Taken Three Times Daily."* And American critics, as we all know, suffer incorrigibly from the Bergman mania. To the question, *Why?,* so many answers crowd, all of them offensive (but that would never restrain me), I'd have to write another book to contain them. However, I'm not sufficiently intrigued by the conformist taste and juvenile traumas of American journalists to undertake the revelatory enterprise. To one pardonable reservation I'll consent: conceivably, where life is forever at the boil, a small exhausted legion, sired by Puritanism, might have turned in relief to a film wherein life is forever in a trance.[1]

A sad consideration ratifies my bewilderment. If the Manhattan gang had seen all 240-odd minutes of Bergman's claustral marathon (the theater version was cut to 168 minutes), their patience would not have been drained nor their common sense outraged; gluttons for self-punishment, they would have been even more gratified!

Ironically—the mildest word I can find for the occasion—at almost the hour when the American contingent was agreeing to lock itself into that single room dominated by two blood-stained towels, marked HIS and HERS, the most creative TV film ever made on a Nordic subject (even the Swedes, with exceptional generosity, agree) was premiered in Scandinavia: Peter Watkins' three-and-a-half-hour biography, *Edvard Munch,* produced by Norwegian television, acted by Norwegian *non*-professionals! Had this film been offered to the gentry slandered above, I've no doubt whatever they would have rejected it on the grounds that since it was made for television it was hence ineligible. My personal judgment is unyielding. Watkins' movie is the most intensive portrayal of a suffering artist—and of the *several sources* of the suffering—ever composed for any

[1] A far simpler probability I'll also acknowledge: everyone, nearly everywhere, is in love with Liv Ullmann. Very nice for her. But infatuation is not synonymous with the more richly diverse obligations of critical intelligence.

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film or theatrical medium. *Edvard Munch* is cinema art in quintessence, manifold and interfluent: at one and the same time the lifelong ordeal of a painter who, like Van Gogh (but for many more years and racked with TB) covered canvas after canvas with virtually no comprehension from the world (of the Academy and at large) of what in his Hell he was doing; an irresistibly Freudian illustration of childhood determinism; a scathing chronicle of a *fin de siècle* Europe which (since the victims of an impervious hierarchy were themselves unfit to effect any social or moral reconstruction) has the wasted force of a boomerang; and, centrally—if not wholly intended—an unsparing analysis, emerging from the rush of chromatic images (cruel, nostalgic, pathetic, abrasive), of that Nordic disease isolated by D. H. Lawrence when he complained, in revulsion, of Ibsen and Strindberg as incessantly "fingering the secret places of the mind."

By formal contrast—and what a contrast!—with the static suburb of Bergman (two or few faces in a milieu without extent or credibility) *Edvard Munch* is a montage of leit-motifs, feverishly poetic, mordantly concrete, advancing by way of regression, inversion and prestissimo unisons; chronological progression is mocked by disorder, by prodding visual rhymes and fugitive thematic fragments. The onward scheme of things is persistently decelerated or disrupted by the eternally backward glance—Orpheus and Tantalus manacled: images established in the opening movements (the convulsions of Munch's young sister in her death agonies, his own ravaging fear and decanting blood, a cabaret blue-grey with smoke in which a juggler performs and a trumpeting waltz goes around and around), these and other recollections from time past are subsequently reintroduced and never wholly lost, returning inexorably, like voices in an exhausting round, pursuing the painter throughout his makeshift days (in Christiania, in Copenhagen, in Paris, in Berlin). Hypnotic and terrifying, the concentrated effect of these impending, unshakeable faces and places (children retching and weeping, Father praying, the mysterious bitch, "Fru Heiberg," constantly beckoning, Sister reading letters from the dead, the smoky beer-halls with their unkillable whores and jugglers) is that of a perpetual commutation between a strenuously inching present headed for a calamitous future, inhibited by a past never to be eradicated: as if the more you matured the less you shed. "All the while I thought I was learning to live," said the great Leonardo with a stoic's dignity, "I was learning how to die."

In the frenetic cycle conveyed by this unbearably painful but lyrical cycle, there is little stoic dignity—scarcely the requirement of a painter like Munch, reared in Protestant piety and sickness-unto-death, intent on hearing "the eternal scream in nature" and researching, plastically, the diseases of the soul: only an inescapable disinterment of growth pains, of a population coughing blood, of erotic dissipation and Bohemian talk-talk-talk, of anti-parental rage and guilt and the artist's doomed infatuation, at twenty, with a married harpy (beautiful as a veil of smoke) which scarred him for life while providing him at the same time, as in Strindberg's career, with misogyny as a peculiar driving force: the contorted verdicts on Woman which, in Munch's case, reached a howling climax in those expressionist vampire madonnas of the 1890s, never more faithfully (if unwittingly) transcribed than by the late Sylvia Plath:

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Herr God, Herr Lucifer
Beware
Beware
Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air.

With his sixth film Peter Watkins (in whom I never previously believed without misgiving) has not simply made a film surpassing any Bergman made at the same stage of his continuity; he has made a film that Bergman could never in a hundred years make, despite his unsleeping defense of the archangelic figment, *artist* (or *saint*)—because Bergman has not a scrap of the historical sense; he has no interest in the multiple interconnections wherewith we all relate to one another, make hell for one another, yet nonetheless supply for one another the only comforts, compensations, moments of light in a long daytime of darkness which enable us to live at all and sometimes call life good. Watkins' characters teem with life, even as foot by foot he invokes death. Bergman's characters, photogenic, to be sure, are half-dead before they start to bicker: they suffer alone; he *wants* them to suffer alone; he has not the generosity to recognize that his mean husbands, his querulous wives and lovers, his self-pitying artist-*types* (he has never for film created a believable working artist), suffer from pure conceit, from willed isolation and immaturity, from sheer ignorance of the ages before them and of the world around them. They are stingy and cadaverous.

Aberration having replaced conduct in our time, it is small wonder that in our popular arts the border between feasibility and hallucination is so often erased. When I watch the films of Alexander Kluge and Rainer Fassbinder, for example, whether they are supposed to be naturalistic or Brechtian, I get the uneasy feeling that everybody in them is half-witted or that the director, himself, has no perception of social reality: to be altogether devoid of that perception is by clinical standards madness! Hans Jurgen Syberberg is a borderline case. His hang-up, when I was viewing his stuff, was the half-mad, totally extravagant Ludwig II of Bavaria, subject of a film that went on for four hours (or was it four days?), with stage settings only, a nailed-down camera, Wagner's music, stupefyingly bad actors and anachronistic dialogue designed to be pregnantly astute and prophetic. Why I mention this disaster at all is because it appears to have been a *calculatedly* perverse exhibition: the sequel to it, *Theodor Herneis,* was an astonishingly genuine simulation of a documentary interview with Herneis (who died in the Twenties), filmed flexibly in a definable surrounding. Walter Sedlmayer as title personage was the only visible character; for an hour and a half he took us on a conducted tour of Ludwig's Schloss Linderhof where Herneis had graduated from scullery apprentice to Royal Steward (after the pathetic King's death by drowning he prospered in Munich as a caterer), showing off the kitchens, the anterooms, the chandeliered galleries, the hunting lodge in the woods. Sedlmayer didn't narrate; he *talked* to us, with rapt devotion, with discretion, with an occasional parenthetic pause or lift of the shoulder as who should say, "I could insinuate more but who am I, a minion, to cast the faintest asper-

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sion on the monarch under whose hegemony I flourished?" An actor who can hold your attention for an hour and a half in a solitary performance which most people would not *see* as a performance is exceptional even among the hundred gifted players we acclaim every year in European cinema. The wonder here is that Syberberg in *this* film never interfered with the self-revealing monologue (from Herneis' diary) in order to accentuate unduly the social premises which, with every telling phrase and nuance, aroused one's apprehension and charged the memory with a sensation as close to horror as it was to smiling embarassment.

Judging from *Aguirre, Der Zorn Gottes* (1973), if there's a director of genius in Germany it is Werner Herzog (b. Werner Stipetic in Munich, 1942), whose previous works to the number of eleven (short or full-length) I have not seen, principally because in Germany, where cinema is a stepchild, even so remarkable a film as *Aguirre* is shown once on TV (in this case, conspicuously insulting, without the *color* that enhances its weird enchantment), then disappears into the film-clubs of Europe, unheralded and seen by few. (I saw it at Stockholm's Film Institute, then picked it up again in a back-street "art cinema" in Zurich). For similar reasons I missed Herzog's previous film, *Even Dwarfs Started Small,* which summarizes as wonderfully macabre, and I was concentrating on the present review far from Cannes where his latest film was shown this year, *Every Man for Himself and God Against All* (he has a gift for titles!). *Aguirre* has so far been loudly acclaimed by *Sight & Sound* and in Paris; an interview in French conducted by Simon Mizrahi (January 1975) is among the precious documents of film production.[2]

As in so many German films, the characters in *Aguirre* are tyrannized by the insane, but while in most of the ones mentioned above nearly everybody appears to be out of his wits, the drama of contrast being thereby vitiated, this *tour de force,* made on a tributary of the Amazon in Peru, recounts the inglorious collapse of an heroic expedition dispatched into a wilderness of boiling raids and infested jungle to find, of course, the legendary trove, El Dorado. A sizeable troop of conquistadors, spurred and helmeted, with two noblewomen in velvet, caparisoned horses and a retinue of Indian captives, descends the Andean ravines, then proceeds by river on a flotilla of constructed rafts. They are steadily and swiftly decimated—by fever, by unseen Indian foes who shower them with arrows, and above all by Aguirre, self-styled "the wrath of God" (quite mad whether from the altitude or from Original Sin the Spanish records do not reveal); this gimpy, choleric subaltern blows up rafts, persuades the troop to forswear its allegiance to Pizarro, proclaims King Phillip of Spain dethroned, crowns a lesser chieftain "Emperor of Peru," engineers the execution of Ursua, the nominal leader, and plans to establish a "pure dynasty" with his fourteen-year-old daughter. Klaus Kinski, by repute almost as destructively off-balance as the Aguirre he impersonates, stomps up and down like a proto-Ahab, hip dislocated, one arm shorter than the other, wild-eyed and as durable as evil.

The ending of this film is fabulous, if indeed there's any lesser word for the whole production (actually shot in fewer than seven weeks with no loss

[2] Distributed by Michele Dimitri Films, 38 rue de Laborde—75008 Paris.

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or crippling of personnel!). Along the lower reaches of the widening Amazon, the single giant raft remaining from those launched upstream glides tranquilly, everyone aboard save Aguirre dead and moldering. Suddenly, *hundreds* of monkeys are swarming on the raft (like *rats*!), clambering all over the oblivious Aguirre, as erect as his distorted frame will allow. Moving swiftly from distance across the broad flood, the camera circles and recircles the raft with its freight of gamboling monkeys and fly-blown Spaniards. Glaring triumphantly into the blanched sunlight tinting the jungle he has "conquered," the survivor demoniacally pronounces to the listening continent: *Ich bin Aguirre—Der Zorn Gottes*!

Asked by the interviewer referred to above what he considered especially "German" in the subject of *Aguirre,* Herzog answered, *in effect:* the passion to explore in depth and the despair that ensues. While he did not deny that the ethos he sensed may have emerged, naturally enough, from given aspects of the history into which he himself was born, he did *not* encourage the lazy notion that Aguirre, the man, is symbolic. Critics notoriously cannot accept the wicked as universal; they cannot receive a sanguinary event without a familiar political analogy. To see Aguirre as Ivan the Terrible, Stalin or Goebbels is a totally unhelpful reference. Aguirre is the *ding an sich,* a sub-*conquistador*, a substantial lunatic self-revealed in the archives. (And he lives next door to you.) The film, one of the great spectacles, is a despondent misadventure story, its own justification because it is a dreadful narrative re-created with biting veracity in a landscape so inimical that only naked Indians and giant butterflies can resist the corruption of its overwhelming beauty.

Among a half-dozen films from Spain all but one were, as you might suspect, as dispassionate as the knife with which you sever your wrist-veins in a warm bath. *Un Cuento Cruel,* the subtitle of one item, could as well describe the majority. All were fascinating, if unpremeditated, exposures of the Spanish psyche in diverse situations; if none was flawless, all were suavely edited and the number of gratifying performances was impressive. *Vera: A Cruel Story* was an absurd invention borrowed from the French Romantic, Villiers de L'Isle Adam: the necrophiliac rivalry between a young count and his glum retainer for the dead body but effluent presence of the Count's French wife. Fernando Gomez (an Argentinian eminently installed in Spanish cinema) played the obdurate (ultimately ghoulish) major-domo with a quality I can best describe as that of burnt umber. Marred by a few fatuous shots where the directress, Josefina Molina Reig, nervously resolved to overinstruct her audience, the film had a luminous surface, exploiting Goya-style closeups of noblemen, a stunning period "wardrobe" and burnished interiors embellished with the inevitable Moorish touch, all of which should compensate the foreign viewer not customarily seduced by the charnel nonsense of Gothic romance. *Mi Querida Señorita,* contemporary yet strangely provincial when focused on the urban scene, would never entice me if I had only a synopsis of the content: a spinster who, in mid-age, discovers, with the help of a strategic operation, that she is in biological actuality a male! This molluscian character was played with delightful poise and physical tact (no camp, no egregious "takes" for the audience) by Lopez Vasquez; though not a searching inquest of a transformation I'd suppose to be catastrophic, the

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film was controlled with cool dexterity by Jaime De Arminan; the essentially comic was invested with a touch of sadness.

From a story by one of Spain's acknowledged masters of the novel, Benito Perez Galdos, unfamiliar to most of us I'm safe in saying, *Tormento* is more intriguing for what it suggests of the original—a shrewd Balzacian social texture—than it is in itself. Pedro Olea tends to over-direct the parasitic relatives of Augustin, who has been supporting them in Madrid with a fortune as mysteriously come by in South America as the riches that transformed the absent Heathcliff. Credibility is salvaged by Francisco Rabal (Augustin), considerably battered since his *Viridiana* days but to me an enormously sympathetic actor. He is also the master presence of *The Other Image* (Antonia Ribas), an indomitable vagabond of mysterious antecedents striving to encourage a young married couple, *blind,* like himself, not to accept their affliction without a struggle. If, erroneously, I interpret this sightless trio and its common isolation from those who "see" as emblems of a political parable, I plead the extenuating circumstance: if the film had not been made in an authoritiarian country, no cryptic meaning would have importuned me. Independently of any civic insinuation, *The Other Image* was an experience quickened by allusive images, slashing moments of embittered social prosecution and of aching aspiration—yet quite, quite horrible: blindness is not a calamity I can embrace with the nerveless equanimity required of a critic. At the climactic episode, a surgical operation on an eye, in closeup, I was unable to look.

Probably the only film of this sequence which distributors will put within your reach is *Ana and the Wolves* (Carlos Saura), principally because it features Geraldine Chaplin in the role of a footloose American student, temporarily governess to the children of Juan, one of three aging brothers (monsters all) who inhabit a sun-dried hacienda miles from mankind and God—where, interrupted by the quasi-epileptic fits of their mammoth *madre* (a hypochondriac with inexhaustible resources for commanding attention), they extrapolate the inhibitions with which she has perverted their lives. Juan, obediently the husband and father, is a compulsive lecher, beleagured by a wife forever threatening suicide. Jose spent his childhood dressed as a girl; now he boasts a museum-full of military costumes and brandishes a loaded gun. Fernando (the dour Gomez again), weaned, when infant, of sucking his thumb by being forced to wear a spiked thimble (like a gobble dish?) that lacerated his mouth, spends his days in a cave and sacrifices dolls after cutting off their hair. Our Jamesian innocent, Ana, believes she can confront the brothers with their lifelies, then pick up her suitcase and go away to live happily ever after. . . . She *does* pick up her suitcase.

Without taking time for a long second thought, I'd say that this is the most cruel movie, *secco,* I have ever seen. Whether or not that's a recommendation is something for the reader to propose for himself.[3]

[3] I am compelled by critical respect to write at least a footnote memorial to my Great Film of the year, which more than likely you'll never see: *Snowfall* (Ferenc Kosac); photography setups unrivalled since Eisenstein (Sandor Sara is hands-down the greatest camera virtuoso in the world); exalting wilderness scenery; desertion and partisan warfare (the Horthy regime era in Hungary); a prolonged Trial by Black Humor in a mountain meadow; the human virtues and vices of survival; the animal virtue of resignation. And snow covers all.

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CHARLES W. MILLARD

Anthony Caro

In considering Anthony Caro's sculpture one is forced to confront and evaluate the history of the medium for the last century and three-quarters in a way that is probably unique in the history of art. As one tries to understand and express what it is that happens in Caro's sculpture, and what that sculpture stands for, it becomes apparent that there is lacking not only an accepted and acceptable historical framework in which to situate the work but a meaningful vocabulary with which to discuss it. The course of painting since the French Revolution has by now been carefully documented and plotted, a scholarly exercise assisted by the orderly progress of the art itself and by the succession of masters in whose work that progress has been embodied. The result is a firm foundation on which to build discussions of contemporary painting. Nineteenth-century sculpture, on the other hand, is an almost totally unexplored art, and the poverty of critical and scholarly writing in the field leaves one abysmally unprepared to come to grips with as complex and well-realized an *oeuvre* as that of Caro. In part this poverty is due to the erratic development of sculpture itself, which has explored new ideas not in the work of its major figures but in those of artists who were not primarily sculptors at all. Indeed, the increasing dependence of sculpture on painting for impetus and ideas, although not necessarily for forms, has been one of the striking features of its development since the beginning of the last century. If, however, it is difficult to come to critical grips with Caro's accomplishment, it is a difficulty more than repaid by the discovery that that accomplishment not only resumes many of sculpture's historical problems, particularly those associated with the relationship of sculpture and painting, but brings sculpture back home—brings it, as it were, back to Clodion—re-establishing it in its own terms as an expressive medium of the first rank.

Caro came cautiously to sculpture. Although he experimented with it at the age of fifteen, his degree was in engineering and he did not decide on sculpture as a career until he was twenty-two. His first important extant pieces were made when he was thirty, the intervening years having been spent in rigorous training and apprenticeship. These early works, dating from 1954 to 1959, are largely human figures between two and six feet in height, and are characterized by lumpy, cylindrical forms of great simplicity. Their surfaces are pitted and scored in a violently Expressionist manner, reminiscent of some of the work of Dubuffet and Giacometti, and if they sometimes seem to make oblique reference to contemporary work by Moore, Butler, or other English sculptors, they are most notable for their vigorous independence. Late in 1959, Caro spent two months in the United States and Mexico, coming into contact with, among other artists,

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David Smith and Kenneth Noland. Having mastered the sculptural vocabulary of mid-50's England, this physical break opened to him the new route for which he seems to have been searching. Smith's welded sculpture and, even more, Noland's stained targets brought home to him with what simplicity and literalness it was possible to make works of art, and how little necessary to the creation of such works was the baggage of the European artistic tradition. Returning to England, he set to work at once on a series of constructed metal pieces wholly devoid of figural reference. The first of these, *Twenty-Four Hours,* juxtaposes a truncated triangle and a circle, the former in front of the latter and both at right angles to the ground, with a slightly tilted square placed behind the circle. An elementary sequence of geometrical forms varied only by the truncation of the triangle and the tilting of the square, *Twenty-Four Hours* sits directly on the ground and is painted dark brown. In dispensing with both the traditional pedestal and such modern accommodations as Smith's wheels, it is the logical result of Caro's own figurative explorations, most of which require a pedestal simply as a surrogate ground, rather than as a discrete sculptural or architectural accommodation. In being painted, it at once suppresses such associations as may cling to unpainted steel and acknowledges Caro's debt to the freedom of American painting, an acknowledgement emphasized by the small circle painted at the center of the circular plane, as if in homage to Noland's targets.

Caro continued to explore constructed sculpture throughout 1960 and 1961, using heavy elements, most often I-beams, placed at right angles to the ground and proceeding along it in various sequences. The linear extension of these pieces, and the progression of their elements from one end to the other, became increasingly sophisticated and increasingly space-involving when compared with the simple pictorial planar recession of *Twenty-Four Hours*. The culmination of their explorations is to be found in *Midday* (1960), in which the plane on top of which the square I-beam sections are arranged is raised off the ground at an angle, resulting in a configuration not unlike a child's slide. The fact that one of the I-beam sections is bolted to the slide at an unexpected angle results not merely in a fanciful lightness in a piece constructed of ponderous elements, but in a charging of the spaces between the I-beam sections that prefigures things to come. *Midday* is unique among the pieces of its time in its openness, accentuated by the view under the raised slide which allows the piece to be seen through completely, breaking down the screen-like frontality that naturally results from placing a sequence of structural elements along the ground. The increasingly bright and glossy color of pieces such as *Midday,* combined with the patterns of heavy bolts holding their components together, resulted in a surface richness that was the industrial equivalent of the mottled surfaces of Caro's modeled pieces of the mid-50's. Just how radical a degree of abstraction Caro obtained in these pieces can be judged by comparing them with an untitled piece made of painted I-beam sections by David Smith in 1964, almost certainly in response to Caro's ideas, the verticality of which evidences the residual figuration present

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throughout Smith's work and sometimes acknowledged in its titles (e.g. *Running Daughter*).

1962 was an extraordinarily good year for Caro, one in which he consolidated his explorations of the previous two years and broke through to new realizations of the most disparate and fanciful ideas. A series of first-rate pieces—*Sculpture 2, Hopscotch, Early One Morning*—issued from his studio, differing radically in appearance one from another. *Lock,* presumably an early piece from that year, is still constructed of bolted I-beam sections, but these are now arranged low to the ground, one parallel with it and one at a slight angle, allowing the viewer to see almost the entire piece at a glance. The various other elements of *Lock* do nothing to interrupt this openness. Similar visibility is achieved in *Sculpture 2* by different means. *Sculpture 2* is composed of thinner, smaller-scaled I- and T-beam pieces arranged in an anti-logical pattern. Only two of these are run along the ground as points of reference, the rest standing up vertically or at angles to create a complex spatial interplay in which nothing is hidden from anything else. The structural or built-up feeling of the beams in previous pieces is completely abandoned in *Sculpture 2* in favor of the spatial demands of the open composition. One is here first fully aware in Caro's work of the effect of elements touching rather than supporting each other—an effect to which William Rubin has referred. That effect is carried further—as far, indeed, as Caro has ever carried it—in *Hopscotch,* a piece composed of small-diameter pipe of various lengths floated off the ground, and parallel to it, at different heights, inter-connected by metal bars of rectangular section placed diagonally across the pipe and by three narrow sheets of corrugated metal. No verbal description can convey the effect of this piece, visually nearest to that of a musical staff and its notes, which is almost perspectival in its illusionism. Its space-entrapping network of elements seems to float unsupported, although it is in fact held up by the diagonal metal bars, which fail to read as legs because they are at oblique angles to the ground. The pictorial nature of the illusionism of *Hopscotch* is even more apparent in a related piece, *Lake,* in which the linear network of elements is anchored at either end by a vertical plate, which creates a sort of picture plane point of reference. This device of confining irregular linear sculptural incident between two uprights is one to which Caro has returned at intervals (*First National* 1964, *Horizon* 1966, *Veddugio Flat* 1972-73). *Early One Morning* is the *summa* of Caro's preoccupations to 1962, a harbinger of what was to come, and one of Caro's masterpieces. A long hollow metal bar of square section is raised at some distance from the floor and provides a point of reference for various sculptural events, including I-beam uprights which descend from it to the floor, rectangular planes of metal which are cantilevered horizontally from it or raised vertically above it, and a succession of bent and irregularly placed metal bars the placement of which defies expectation, both structural and sculptural. Consummately free, the lines and planes of *Early One Morning* reaffirm Caro's pictorial inspiration while demonstrating how thoroughly he is able to transmute that inspiration into purely sculptural terms. The unexpect-

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edness of its relationships testifies to the latitude Caro gives himself in exploring new sculptural vocabulary; its success is a tribute to the force of his fancy and its seriousness shows the intensity of his genius. In these respects it has perhaps more in common with the painting of Miro than with any other visual expression of the twentieth century.

For the next few years Caro pursued separately some of the concerns announced in *Early One Morning,* turning first to how sculpture might relate to the ground, then to openness, extent, and the degree to which the number of sculptural elements could be reduced, and finally to effects of floating. During 1964 and 1965, a time largely spent teaching at Bennington College, he returned to earth-bound and less linear forms in a series of pieces that included *Titan, Bennington, Shaftsbury* and *Wide.* These were organized around long metal plates, placed at an angle to the ground, off which various sculptural events took place. Only *Wide* projected linear elements from its base plate, the others using I-beam and L-shaped forms arranged at such distances that the entire sculpture was visible at a glance, an effect enhanced by their lying low to the ground. He followed this in 1965 and 1966 with a series of tiny pieces consisting of low upright plates run along the ground with only the slightest visual inflections resulting from the addition, usually in the plane of the plate, of small non-planar elements. At the same time, and in contrast to these pieces, Caro experimented with extreme reductionism, making pieces of the thinnest possible linear elements arranged in the barest possible configurations upright from the ground (*Farnham, Sleepwalk, Smoulder*). Thus he was able to explore simultaneously how fine the adustments of sculptural elements could be and how completely the fabric of sculpture could be dispensed with. In the latter case, Caro pushed sculptural illusionism to its limits, since the unpredictable placement of his few linear elements made these pieces seem to close space when seen from any single viewpoint, when in fact they extended for considerable distances in extremely open patterns. In 1966, Caro produced a group of works incorporating metal mesh, which complicated the nature of his illusionism (*Carriage, Source, The Window*). Sheets of mesh were used standing upright to create transparent screens against which, through which, or in relation to which, the other elements of the sculpture, most of them also upright, were seen. While these other solid or linear elements created patterns not unlike those of the reductionist pieces, the mesh areas thickened the interstices in such a way as to give the compositions bulk without ameliorating their illusionism. The mesh holds the solid elements in suspension, as it were. It is a device not dissimilar from the Cubist use of pointillism to combine substance and openness, keeping linear patterns from becoming too diffuse or planar ones too congested.

From 1967 until about 1970 Caro explored the illusionism inherent in the floating of horizontal elements, as well as the possibilities of raising the sculptural ground off the actual ground and developing configurations of elements both above and below the resulting table-like plane. His masterpiece of these years is *Prairie* (1967), in which a series of cantilevered pipes

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and flat and corrugated metal sheets appears to float unsupported. Everything is exposed, the pipes floating over the plates, each plate arranged so as not to obstruct one's view of the others. *Prairie* is painted a matte mustard color, the matte paint, which Caro preferred during the late '60's, suppressing reflections and assisting the near-perfect articulation of the piece by reflecting light differently at each different angle. This and the invisible method of facture—Caro had long since given up bolting for welding—deemphasize surface effect and tactility. The breadth of the effect, not to mention the breadth of the area seemingly encompassed by the piece, make *Prairie* one of the monuments of twentieth-century sculpture. Caro's other sculpture of this time explores two different, but related, ideas. In one, elements placed on the ground, often sections of tank heads, are capable of suggesting that the sculpture continues below the ground itself (*Argentine,* 1968). In the other a table is created by floating a horizontal plane well above the ground, and sculptural configurations are developed both above and below the plane (*Trefoil,* 1968; *Orangerie,* 1969). It is as if the latter pieces brought above ground what was hidden in the tank-head sculptures. In these works, particularly, one notices the tendency toward integration in Caro's sculpture. Previous works, from *Early One Morning* to *Prairie,* had clearly distinguished linear from planar components. In *Trefoil* the calligraphic play surrounding the raised table-plane is executed in strips of metal that are thin in one dimension but broad in the other, so that it is no longer possible to separate line and plane distinctly. This tendency is even more pronounced in *Orangerie,* in which the calligraphy is created by helices that not only combine line and plane but add to the irregularity and unexpectedness characteristic of Caro's work and increase its space-involving three-dimensionality. Variations on the theme of developing sculpture both above and below "ground" are played in the small table pieces created by Caro in the late 1960's, notably *Table Piece LXXXVIII,* many of which explore the diagonal continuity possible in working off the edge of a horizontal plane, something he had investigated as early as 1954 in *Man Holding his Foot.* The apotheosis of all these tendencies is the masterly *Sun Feast* (1969-1970), in which a series of arcs, circles, helices, and planes sport around a raised horizontal table-plane in the freest possible configuration.

Although Caro continued to explore the possibilities of open, calligraphic sculpture into the 1970's, the turn of the decade marks a new moment in his art, as had the turn of the previous decade. Beginning about 1971 he started working with upright planes, flat or bent, juxtaposed with freely-arranged compositions of smaller elements connected on one or both sides. As Caro's sculptural elements have become more regular and geometrical, less fanciful in their arrangement, these adjunct compositions seem increasingly to be vestiges of the open sculpture of the '60's and, indicatively, they have gradually disappeared. Not infrequently, Caro arranged his components at right angles in highly structured compositions (*Ordnance,* 1971). In 1972, he produced a group of sculptures, best described as pierced screens, in which some, but not all, of the sculptural

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incident was visible through a hole cut in an upright or diagonal plane. If Caro's work of the '60's needed to be viewed from all sides to be experienced, it could generally be completely seen at a glance. But the work of the '70's needs to be viewed all around to be both seen and experienced. In general, one senses in it a new gravity and straightforwardness, as if Caro were returning to traditional ideas after a period of playful exploration, an effect reinforced by the fact that he has given up painting his pieces, preferring the reinforcement slightly rusted steel gives his now bulkier forms. Having taken sculpture apart to explore separately the elements of its grammar, he seems now to be reassembling it in a transformed language of which he is the master.

In 1973, Caro made a series of works in Veddugio, Italy, out of relatively few large elements, many of which are the ends of steel rollings with irregular "drawn" contours. Such planar elements continue to make up his work, including the monumental series he created in Toronto in 1974. The best of these pieces, such as the majestic *Dominion Day Flats,* use large, broadly contoured steel sheets placed upright or at angles to the ground and project a breadth foretold by *Prairie.* As always in Caro's large work, small components, tentative shapes, and attention to minor adjustments work against the pieces (cf. *Cool Deck,* 1970-71). In the best of them, however, one feels oneself confronted for the first time with a genuinely monumental abstract sculpture. Although Caro's work has always been expansive and large in scale, linearity and concern for color have heretofore suggested an indoor setting. The pieces of the last few years, however, seem at home outdoors, although Caro does not intend them for particular environments, least of all architectural environments, when he creates them. Eager to explore, Caro has learned from modernist painting a willingness to be bold that has allowed him to push sculpture far beyond the state in which he found it fifteen years ago. If his inspiration has been from painting, his accomplishment has been purely sculptural and the self-assured ease with which he now moves into a new phase of his art promise a monumental sculpture to rival that of the greatest sculptors of the past.

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MARCIA B. SIEGEL

Rudiments of a Literature

UP TO NOW THE LITERATURE of dance has been rudimentary. Most of the people who were deeply interested in dance wanted to do dance, and the dance fans who were interested in writing found it more lucrative and satisfying to write about other things. It's amazing how much dance writing of the past began as a closet occupation—an outlet for feelings and reactions that wouldn't stay confined to lobby conversations. But conversation isn't literature. Developing the languages in which to analyze dance, and pinning down the event to which those languages apply are major concerns of our embryonic profession.

Before we can raise the quality of dance literature, writers need some prospect of publication, and it's encouraging to see that the proverbial gloomy estimates about the number of dance fans who would read a book are beginning to brighten. The current dance boom has evidently reverberated in the publishing world. During the past year or so ten new dance books and an equal number of reissued older works have come across my desk.

Dance books aimed at a fairly general reader have been limited to just a few main types:

Personality books—memoirs, diaries, interviews or biographies of famous dancers, and collections of articles about famous dancers. (Dover has reprinted, in an unfortunately oversized and overpriced format, a very interesting portfolio put together in 1922 by the Russian critic V. Svetloff on Anna Pavlova.)

Popular histories (Newsweek Books' dance entry in its World of Culture series was published last season and written by critic Jack Anderson) and capsule descriptions of famous ballets. (George Balanchine and Francis Mason's *101 Stories of the Great Ballets* was brought out in paperback by Doubleday last summer.)

Reprints of dance reviews or out-of-print dance books from the past. (Dance Horizons has the most impressive and useful list of these reprints in paperback, and has now instituted a hardcover series that included this year a collection of the reviews of Carl Van Vechten.)

Anthologies of new or reprinted material on a central theme. (Selma Jeanne Cohen's *Dance as a Theatre Art,* published in 1974 by Dodd, Mead, spans four centuries of development.)

Picture books like Judy Cameron's glossy view of the Bolshoi Ballet (Harper & Row).

What we don't have often enough are dance books that represent serious, concentrated research, study, observation or speculation. The examples of scholarship that find their way into print are apt to be academic exercises, with all the drawbacks of third-hand information,

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unoriginal ideas and flatfooted writing spawned by that genre. We don't have, for instance, a history of modern dance. We don't have a critical study of the *choreography* of the Diaghilev era, although the Ballets Russes has been heavily documented as to its personal and organizational aspects. No one has written about the Bennington School of Dance. There is no single critical examination of the work of Martha Graham or George Balanchine, or any other major choreographer. And if no writer has been willing to apply himself to such essential portions of our dance heritage, if no publisher has been willing to sponsor such study, then no wonder the lesser things have been neglected. Things like a study of dance costume, lighting or design, an account of the influence of Russian ballet in America, or a survey or what happened to dance during and after World War II, or a look at dance in the movies.

This state of affairs is self-perpetuating, and has two sources, each reinforcing the other. Dance research is appallingly hard to do. Historical documentation is incomplete, often inadequate or careless. Critics disagree on facts and interpretation, and worst of all, the works themselves no longer exist. Critical research depends on being able to see the dance works themselves, and except for current repertory—which isn't always in the best state of preservation—one must refer to film. The scholar soon finds that the considerable amount of existing dance film is hedged about with the most labyrinthine, often impenetrable barriers—permission and viewing restrictions that close off most film as a resource to writers.

Besides that, not many people want dance writing to get done. Publishers don't think it sells, so they don't promote what few books they print. Foundations and sponsors don't think it's serious or important enough. And readers, especially the most obvious readers, the dance community, haven't much use for it. Teachers in university dance departments will put two books on reserve in the library or illegally Xerox pertinent chapters rather than require students to buy their own copies and enjoy books on their own.

Photographer James Klosty has reiterated this dance anti-intellectualism in his book about the contemporary patron of it, Merce Cunningham.[1] Klosty's first thought in his introduction is to deny that a writer could have anything of value to say about Cunningham. "This is not a dance book," he warns. "Almost all the contributors to this book have worked directly with Merce Cunningham. Thus most of them are artists and none—save Edwin Denby—are dance critics. [Klosty reprints two thirty-year-old Denby reviews of early Cunningham concerts.] Should any reader feel seriously deprived by this exclusion," Klosty adds, without the slightest expectation that anyone will, they're referred to a comment by Stravinsky: "What a reviewer says/may be inconsequential,/ even in

[1] MERCE CUNNINGHAM, by *James Klosty*. Saturday Review Press/Dutton. $15.95; $8.95 paper.

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the short run./ What I object to/ Is his right to say it." Stravinsky at least used some verbal agility of his own in throwing his prejudice around.

Klosty's book is about evenly divided between written contributions from Cunningham's associates and photographs by Klosty of the Cunningham company, mostly rehearsing, touring, and goofing around. Klosty says he deliberately hasn't included many pictures of the company dancing. The two art forms are incompatible, Klosty says. "While photography is literally a timeless art—what's left when time is taken away—dancing's very being is time. . . . By removing continuity even the finest photographs of dancing falsify its reality and subvert its truth." An interesting observation, and one I suspect Klosty might extend to the written representation of dance too.

Yet, in setting up this stricture, Klosty has made a very one-sided, possibly subverting book. The written contributions describe how Cunningham choreographs, how he rehearses, how the company travels, how they operate and how they produce concerts. Except for the two Denby fragments and a mysterious message from Lincoln Kirstein on why he thinks Cunningham is more or less insignificant, none of the writers tell us how Cunningham dances or what his choreography looks like. Klosty's pictures are similarly anecdotal. Jasper Johns spray-painting a leotard on Carolyn Brown. Dancers waiting, clowning, sweating, resting, mostly in empty theaters and cluttered stages. Cunningham looking appraisingly, benignly, exhaustedly, glumly but never angrily at the dancers. The shadowy shapes of dancers in the mirrors of innumerable studios and dressing rooms.

Interesting as all of this is, and sometimes startling, funny, bizarre or beautiful, it is in a way peripheral to what the Cunningham company does. Even if we were to admit the inadequacy of most descriptions of dance, I think we have to keep doing them. As it stands now, as Klosty and probably Cunningham himself would have it, dancers cease to be artists when the curtain comes down. The world knows the great dancers of history for their feuds and love affairs, their costume innovations, the number of noble patrons they had. I think it would be tragic if Merce Cunningham is remembered as a photogenic kook.

His seriousness, of course, isn't really in doubt, and Carolyn Brown has given Klosty a fine piece on working with Cunningham, as she did for twenty years as a principal dancer. She once wrote somewhere else that after all that time she didn't feel she knew him very well, and here she begins to examine his paradoxical ways of working. He rehearses for months, "working for an exactness of execution and timing that he wants," only to give the designers and musicians carte blanche to disrupt or even change the total effect of the dance on the spot. Brown alludes to some fundamental differences between Cunningham and the artist with whom he's been almost inseparably linked during his whole career, John Cage. These differences need to be elaborated, and I hope Carolyn Brown will do that in a rumored forthcoming book of her own. Brown would make a wonderful dance critic, by the way.

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The Cage style of clever evasion marks a great deal of the writing in the book. Cage himself contributed several pages of sly profundities about Merce Cunningham and the dancers as revealed in random incidents related to eating, traveling and hobnobbing with the Great. Most of the dancers among Klosty's contributors affected some kind of oblique Cagean discourse, but a few other commentators were more direct. Particularly enlightening is Lewis Lloyd's report of the crucial middle years when he managed the company and it changed, along with the dance world around it, from an aggregation of devoted artists who worked too much and too cheaply, to a professional group with regular performing commitments. The shift wasn't comfortable, and still isn't, and Lloyd's account of it clearly sets out the main issues in the arts subsidy debate. In fact, it's one of the few discussions I've heard in which the heavy subsidization of dance is seen as less than universally beneficial. Lloyd is one of those rare administrators who understands artists as well as the practical, hardnosed tactics by which we keep them alive.

First-hand accounts and other primary documentation are the best source for the dance researcher, and I expect to mine Klosty's book repeatedly in the future. Yvonne Rainer's *Work 1961-73*[2] also has that gritty tension of authenticity. Rainer's book, like Rainer's work in relation to Cunningham's, is more experimental, odder looking. It's somewhere between a documentary, a memoir and an artifact. There are long, interminably long, boring lists of activities that constituted various Rainer dances—"Roll Bill up in d.s. matt. as D walks away. Bill gets up and walks toward D as Y does backward somersault and walks backward toward them and does flip over their hands. All walk forward. (d.s.) Y climbs piggyback once. Assisted jump and leap. . . ."—interspersed with scripts from her films, diagrams, photographs, correspondence, a few of the most outrageous reviews, and Rainer's contemporary comments on how her work has developed. It's a remarkable record. Books like this are fairly common in the post-McLuhan age, and the free form makes especially good sense for a dance book. The material doesn't boil down successfully to journalism, so why not present it in its original form.

Rainer is an artist of such duality that she keeps you constantly off base. An admirer of Cunningham, she doesn't share his suspicion of words. She admits, in fact, to a great respect for them; she hopes her book will illuminate her work, not obscure it. Her language in the autobiographical passages and in a diary of her 1971 trip to India is very straightforward. It seems at first so unaffected that you expect it to be deeply revealing. But after a while you realize that openness and naturalness are hardwon qualities for Rainer, that she isn't going to tell you anything she doesn't mean to tell, that the appearance of being ordinary is something she has to strive for, since she's anything but an ordinary woman.

Rainer's choreography seems to have changed considerably over the years. Her early, spare, severe and ordinary-looking pieces she describes

[2] WORK 1961-73, by *Yvonne Rainer*. Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design/New York University Press. $20.00; $11.95 paper.

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as "simple, undistinctive activities made momentous thru their inaccessibility." Now—or I should say in 1973, when Rainer gave her last major dance performances in New York—the texture is dense with emotional overtones, the intent is more overtly theatrical, "a kind of ordering between commitment and ambiguity. . . Maybe something between the analytical and sentimental," in Rainer's words. But though the outward forms have changed, Rainer's suspension between directness and ambiguity has not. Her work has always been sexually suggestive, but she covered the innuendo with a deadly serious irony, so you weren't sure whether she was turning you on or putting you on. She longed for spontaneity in her performances but worried about being in charge, exercising too much control, and when what she called "rehearsal behavior" succeeded, when spontaneous reaction and choice became an absorbing performance process, she cut the company loose; it continues to operate without a leader as the Grand Union. Her current work focusses almost exclusively on the internal feelings and experiences of particular characters, presented so exhaustively and with such banality that they lose their emotional charge.

If Cunningham's dance is a process of abstraction, Rainer's might be called a process of objectification. Between them, they have set up the problems and indicated the possibilities from which practically all experimental dance is now working. Rainer's book is especially welcome because critics have dealt least successfully with the avant-garde, and she tells us very clearly what the Judson Church era of the early '60s was about. Ten years later, to see dancers rolling on a mat, walking for a whole dance, making complicated performance decisions during the dance wouldn't be remarked on, let alone questioned. Rainer reminds us what it was like to do these things for the first time. She reminds us how much contemporary choreographers owe to her.

It's astonishing how many dance books come from inside the dance field. A dance critic is assumed to be a former dancer, even though increasing numbers of us are not. Without a literature, to *do* dance is almost the only way to learn about it. Many dance fans, even those who've seen a lot, encounter a highly romanticized and partisan view if they go bone up in the library. John Gruen and Joseph Mazo have both written popular books which uphold the gee whiz tradition that shrouds dance with a veil of magic, ethereality, and the conviction that its essence can't be understood by mortals.

Gruen's *The Private World of Ballet*[3] is a compilation of brief, utterly pedestrian interviews with dancers and choreographers in which the most distinct personality to emerge is that of Gruen. By indulging in the seemingly precise vocabulary of flowery adulation that critics have adopted since Gautier, Gruen makes all his subjects seem like all the others. He finds a way to "describe" most of them as paragons—lyrical but strong, classical but able to do modern, poetic with a dra-

[3] THE PRIVATE WORLD OF BALLET, by *John Gruen*. Viking. $15.00.

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matic side, or dramatic with a poetic side—figuring, I guess, that to explain what anybody does really well would be to imply there's something he doesn't do well. Gruen's questioning, likewise, elicits from this collection of international and artistically dissimilar talents an uncannily uniform set of ideas. After the first hundred pages or so, it seems as if they all have difficulties with choreographers but basically respect them. They all work too hard, are ambitious but not rapacious. They're all simple and unaffected and speak in the exact same rhythms. There isn't a provocative word in this book despite its title, unless the fact that Diaghilev was a homosexual comes as news to you, or matters.

Mazo, who is an arts writer for *Women's Wear Daily,* has taken a more enterprising route into the inner sanctum. He became a groupie with the New York City Ballet for a year. *Dance Is a Contact Sport* is his breathless story of the experience.[4] This is a trashy book—fast, glib, gossipy reading. I thought it was fun, and I'm glad dance is getting important enough to need a trashy book. A lot of Mazo's observations are so true to stereotype that you know they have to be the real thing.

What did begin to get on my nerves was the way, after relating some incident very clearly, he felt he had to add some hyperbole or make a comparison between what he'd seen and the sports or animal world. He tells us with affection and monotonous insistence that dancers are dumb, childlike, and purely ornamental. They are "an organism, a beautiful, not-overly-bright animal trained with carrot and stick to dance Balanchine's ballets and not get in the way of the choreography." This method is supposed to bring the event to us more vividly. It actually trivializes dance by assuming we can't recognize it by its own identity.

Perhaps we need time and distance for this kind of record. One of the best dance histories I've ever read has been re-issued by Wesleyan University Press in conjunction with Pitman Publishing of London. It's Ivor Guest's *The Ballet of the Second Empire,* first published in 1953-55.[5] Covering the golden age of the Paris Opera Ballet, 1847-1870, this book has everything history should have: scholarship, clarity, and an evocation of the period. It's crammed with ballerinas, ballet masters, company politics, scandal, romance, descriptions of lavish spectacles with over a hundred people onstage, quotations from contemporary reviews, and appended chronologies and other information. I hope Wesleyan is making plans to bring out more of Guest's books. They could inspire American writers to get serious about our own dance history, past and current.

[4] DANCE IS A CONTACT SPORT, by *Joseph Mazo*. Saturday Review Press/Dutton. $10.95.

[5] THE BALLET OF THE SECOND EMPIRE, by *Ivor Guest*. Wesleyan University. $16.00.

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Reviews

VERNON YOUNG

The Body of Man

> The body of man is like a flicker of lightning
> existing only to return to Nothingness.
> Like the spring growth that shrivels in autumn.
> Waste no thought on the process for it has no
> purpose,
> coming and going like the dew.
> ("The Body of Man" by Van Hanh. Ly Dynasty. Tr. with W. S. Merwin)[1]

THE BUDDHISTIC INFLUENCE OF THE CHINESE, from whom the Vietnamese had recently won political independence (after a thousand-years resistance!), was still paramount during the Ly Dynasty (1010-1225) and it was rarely absent for long in the centuries to come, modified by Confucian and Taoist doctrine as well as by the attachment to life on earth of the Vietnamese folk. By 1282 a national written language was codified, "in which vernacular Vietnamese was represented by a demotic character script. . . . *chu nom*, 'Southern Writing'." I'm quoting the introduction of Nguyen Ngoc Bich to this altogether congenial, fascinating and sorrowful collection. This is a publication of outstanding interest and permanent value, apart from any contemporary political heightening which will inevitably be imposed on it. Before Communism, the Asiatic mind in crisis turned naturally to timeless modes of being and to eternally present objects (and events); for poets the plum tree, the moon, a flight of cranes, the fall of a dynasty, the irreversible return of autumn. What makes itself felt in these poems, beautifully Englished throughout by W. S. Merwin and Burton Raffel, is the assimilated elegance of Chinese "secular" verse, toughened from time to time by an impudent, peasant skepticism which appears to be the distinctly Vietnamese touch. At the halfway mark (in this anthology) is an eighteenth-century masterpiece composed originally in Sino-Vietnamese, "The Lament of a Warrior's Wife," which stands confidently on its own merits when read with many Chinese poems on the same subject in mind.

After the establishment of *quoc ngu*, a method, originated by the Jesuit order, of transcribing vernacular with the Roman alphabet, and with the subsequent occupation of Vietnam by the French, "modernism" was born, exemplified with special bitterness in a sardonic poem, "Green Nostalgia," subtitled *Soliloquy of a Tiger in a Zoo*. It may be invidious to try distinguishing *recent* Vietnamese verse from the Chinese, as represented in the jumbo-size *Twentieth-Century Chinese Poetry* (Cornell PB, 1970), much of

[1] A THOUSAND YEARS OF VIETNAMESE POETRY, trans. by *Nguyen Ngoc Bich*, with *Burton Raffel* and *W. S. Merwin*. Alfred A. Knopf. $8.95; $4.95 paper.

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the latter being doctrinaire stuff—victory and collectivism. While affirmation may be more desirable than resignation, one is moved to remark that when you make organized workers out of peasants, you don't merely shift the grounds of their affection from a horse to a tractor; you devastate centuries of organic response, filling their bellies and disengaging their minds from the sole environment which can authentically humanize them. Among contemporary Vietnam poems there are no banalities with titles like "The Electric Lights Shine in Everybody's Heart." (We suppose such will be forthcoming.) The ancient Chinese conquerors left their subjects a language and a style. What will the Americans have left the Vietnamese? Certainly not a language! Artificial limbs, perhaps? We have murdered a people in the act of saving them. The tragedy is so barbarous there would seem to be no words for it. The Vietnamese poet has found words.

I hammer the pain of separateness
into a statue to stand in the park.
Below it I carve a horizontal inscription
That reads: Soul of the Twentieth Century.

My statue spills no tears
for it has none left to spend.
My statue tells no stories
for what's the use of telling stories?

My statue: the soul of the century
with no haloes above its head.
My statue: the soul of the century
with no phoenixes beneath its feet.

My statue in fact is bare, naked,
no banner in its hand.
My statue casts its shadow aimless, everywhere,
with stone eyes fixed on Nothing.

("The Statue of the Century")[2]

Twelve hundred years before Vietnam had a poetic language, Sextus Propertius[3] was striving *not* to encompass the opulent heritage already available to him, the better to inscribe his own clear judgments of the unclear empire at that hour shaping itself under Augustus. Propertius may be construed as a poet of love (and its empty aftermaths), as an informal diarist of Imperial Rome, as a subtle polemicist who wanted to keep his head on his shoulders (cf. Book III. iv). In this fastidious but not slavish translation by J.P. McCulloch, what underlines itself for one critic is the prodigious amount of classical learning the poet inherited and the acts of discrimination he was impelled to exercise to keep from foundering,

[2] First published in THE HUDSON REVIEW, Vol. XX, No. 3 (1967).

[3] THE POEMS OF SEXTUS PROPERTIUS, trans. with an Introduction by *J. P. McCulloch*. University of California. PB $2.95.

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a challenge which would henceforth confront all poets burdened by the glory that was Greece and the rheotric that was Rome. Among the several sections of these poems that clamor for primacy, the denunciation of Acanthus (IV, v.) is a sanguinary "purple patch," and I was both moved and amused by Propertius' urban, thoroughly un-Greek aversion to shouldering the salt tides in "hot pursuit of gain" (from the elegy to his friend, Paestus, III, vii.): ". . . Let him be sand-drifted/ and when a seafarer sails by his grave/ let him say that brave men/ might well fear death by water./ Go build curved keels,/weave the sails of death;/ mens' hands have wrought such ruin at sea,/Earth being too small a tomb/ we add the ocean. . . ."

The question of what is Classical and what Alexandrian is of course consummately raised by the poetry of Constantin Cavafy.[4] One of the canniest appreciations of this disingenuous poet is a verse by Ronald Bottrall (q.v.) who wrote many on the subject:

> Ignoring the small warring states and
> The Greece that exists as a schoolroom plug
> Or a smudged tear in a don's eye
> He created a city of the living tongue
> The tongue of the Greece that we know,
> The Greece of broken pavements and broken promises.
> He gave blood to ghosts and became an era.

The increasing attention paid to Cavafy is responsible for the present complete bilingual edition (a beautifully manufactured book) in the best available translations, those of Keeley and Sherard. Cavafy's personal accent is seductive; his recognition that erotic love is seven-eights imagination, a salutary correction to the still prevailing common view. For decadent reasons, I think, he is at present much more likely to be over- than under-estimated. Cavafy perfected but certainly did not originate the soliloquy in which a personage of past times is endowed with the disenthralled insight of our modernity. If it could be said that much of W. H. Auden, Zbigniew Herbert and David Slavitt (q.v.) would be unthinkable without Cavafy, it is equally valid to suggest that much of Cavafy is inconceivable without Robert Browning and, alas!—Oscar Wilde (touching with a little rod the honey of romance and losing a life's inheritance!). As much as I personally delight in Cavafy, his classical response to romance in the gutter, I'll confess to being wearied by those boys perfumed in oil, and I'd have to acknowledge that with all his anachronistic brilliance he never wrote a single poem as great in its genre as "The Bishop Orders his Tomb at St. Praxed's."

Odysseus Elytis is another kind of Greek, quite. Declining the immaculate discipline and the consent to eliminate that rescues Cavafy's poetry for the critical intelligence, Elytis is a paragon of enthusiasm, of protean moods, multiple forms; his purpose, in essence: the deification of the sun

[4] C. P. CAVAFY: COLLECTED POEMS, trans. by *Edmund Keeley* and *Philip Sherard*. Ed. by *George Savidis*. Princeton University. $20.00; PB $3.45.

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and of the body of man. An early poem, "Breasting the Current," establishes the mercurial disposition which—despite commentators' belief that the invasion of Crete and combat experience universalized his reactions—thereafter characterizes his oceanic output. ". . . I am not today as I was yesterday/ The weather vanes have taught me to feel. . . ." Kimon Friar's collection[5] (the introduction to which is as lush as the Elytis verse) will give you the full range of this unconfined and to me bewildering poet; it also includes a part of Elytis' masterwork, *The Axion Esti,* which has also received a complete and first-rate translation by Edmund Keeley and George Savidis.[6] The title simply (!) means "worthy it is" and has a double Mariolatric connotation. When you learn further (as a merely introductory sample) that Elytis plays with anagrams that include his own name and Ellas (Greece), you begin to suspect that an advanced degree of Eliotic abstruseness lurks in the translator's description of the three-part poem as "a kind of spiritual autobiography which attempts to dramatize the national and philosophic extensions of a highly personal sensibility." I'm forced to add that for me this seems a highly arrogant sensibility, trying to be all things to all men while incorporating the national tragedy in his own persistently conspicuous ego. Part One ("Genesis") is a truly beautiful invocation of eternal Greece; the second, a kaleidoscopic vision of the War and its sequel, written in an anthology of styles, prose and verse, descends into bathos at the end with a vulgar and recognizably Whitmanesque prophecy; the final section is a *Gloria* in praise of some state of mind or soul I can't trust myself to interpret briefly, since I haven't half clarified its eloquent if unrestrained idealism and its eclectic imagery. I fear you have to be Greek to accept this poem (and many more by Elytis) in all its verbal diffusion and its emotional importunity.

If to be properly Classical (i.e. Sophoclean Classical) is to occupy oneself with what *is* rather than with what should be, Yannis Ritsos (b. 1909),[7] in the poems superbly turned into English by Nikos Strangos, might be named classical in a sense we find more acceptable (more familiar, perhaps) than the Dionysian sweep of Elytis or Kazantzakis. Yet it must not be assumed, if you are unfamiliar with Ritsos, that he is detached from passions or that he perceives what *is,* unfractured. Difficult to define in order justly to praise him—I think he's one of the great poets of contemporary Europe—he has been, paradoxically, a political revolutionary (spending years in prisons and exiles) who wrote poems incorrigibly personal, frequently apolitical, ranging from an undisguised simplicity of form and matter to those that comprise within a few lines duplicities of meaning which an hour's scrutiny may fail to decipher. Not

[5] THE SOVEREIGN SUN, by *Odysseus Elytis*. Selected Poems. Trans. with Intro. and notes by *Kimon Friar*. Temple. $10.00.

[6] THE AXION ESTI. By *Odysseus Elytis,* trans. by *Edmund Keeley and George Savidis*. Pittsburgh. PB $3.50.

[7] YANNIS RITSOS: SELECTED POEMS, trans. by *Nikos Stangos*. Intro. by Peter Bien. Penguin Modern European Poets. $3.50 if available in U.S.A.

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seldom he writes formal equivalents of Chirico or René Magritte, either juxtaposing unrelated actions within the same frame or focusing with unbearable clarity on a simple immemorial gesture of humankind until it begins to warp, waver, become absurd, and yield a grinding undertone of the hideous. Normally, the annexation of modes appropriate to the plastic arts is not fruitful in poetry. Ritsos is hauntingly successful. His fusion of ancient Greek story with the terrors of yesterday—the firing squads, the masked informers, ". . . fever; cement; damp;/ sweaty hair; inscriptions on the walls scratched with fingernails/ names, dates, small covenants/ . . . . "—is done with genius, each image, each poem a luminous hard-edged impression, uncluttered by the grapevines of an Elytis. "Whatever happened now was in another time." Duration and sound freeze in such poems: the man in exile, recalling to his mind's eye pictorial scraps like senseless encounters in a dream, suffocates as he looks on at his own death ("Awaiting his Execution"), or conjures somnambulist fishermen and the objects which have replaced them, dehumanized and silent. "One day, where there were windows and people, only wet stones remain/ and a statue, its face in the soil. . . ." To powerful effect, Ritsos adverts directly to an historical or epic passage-at-arms to point up a modern analogy; in so doing he, too, like Bottrall's Cavafy, gives blood to ghosts. "After the Defeat," "And Narrating Them . . .," "The Decline of the Argo," "Penelope's Despair"—all from 1968—are literally fabulous; at the same time their protagonists are more vital than the frozen figments of his own era.

The nominal world of his Resistance poems (e.g. "Search," "Interrogation Offices," "After the Trial," "Precautions," "Scene") is mindful of Milovan Djilas (the short stories), Zbigniew Herbert, Horst Bienek. Ironically, the political tyranny that provoked *their* literature was once a political promise to Ritsos. Can we doubt that if Communism had triumphed in Greece his poems would have been no different in kind or substance? What on earth, from a century-old delusion, could the man who created this superlative methaphor ("Alone With His Work") have expected?

> He rode alone all night, frightened, mercilessly spurring
> the ribs of his horse. They'll be waiting for him, it was said, to
> come without fail;
> there was great need. When he arrived at dawn,
> no one was waiting for him, no one was there. He looked around.
> Desolate houses, locked up. They were sleeping.
> He heard, next to him, his horse, panting—
> foam on its mouth, wounds on its ribs and its back scratched.
> He put his arms round his horse's neck and wept.
> The horse's eyes, big, dark, dying,
> were two towers, his own, distant, in a landscape where it
> rained.

Once in this magazine I wrote that Cesar Vallejo was an original. An occasional figure of this sort persuaded me: "He was killed softly in his

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wife's hair," or "His corpse was full of world." The force of that originality is less evident the more of him I read.[8] He's the stuff of which myths are made by intellectuals (of a sort) who lead tame lives and feed on allegedly spectacular crackups. Vallejo predicted his own death on a rainy day in Paris; we're asked to weep for him instead of for those who died on a wet day in Madrid and for whose blood he wrote poems tediously decked in apostrophes, incantations, diatribes pregnant with prophesy. To these terminal works, Clayton Eshleman has written a preface of unbelievable claptrap about the Flux and the Cross, Communism and Apocalypse, in fevered sentences that begin without capitals, as if type-case might identify him with Vallejo if ardor fails to do so. His translations strike me as abominably awkward but I'll concede it may be difficult to translate a man who incessantly substitutes litany for authentic structure. ("el humo de la especie,/ el humo del nino/ el humo solitario de dos trigos/ el humo de Ginebra, el humo de Roma, el humo de Berlin"). No doubt the Spanish ear accepts this bell-tolling mesmerism more eagerly than mine. As far as I'm concerned, if these poems, via Eshleman, even half represent Vallejo's crowning testament, his eminence in the Spanish, or any other domain, is an unconfirmed rumor. I am not impressed by the Spaniard's perennial thirst for setting up arenas in which he can die, over and over, to the plaudits of a howling mob. Elie Faure closed his great chapter on Spain (in his "History of Art") with the equivocal report that when, years after burial, Goya's coffin was reopened, two skeletons were found in it.

Another victim of another revolution, Osip Mandelstam is a pillar of dignity after the screaming self-aggrandizement of Vallejo. Even as he circled in an abattoir, waiting for the sledge-hammer which he knew would descend on him at any dawn, this incredible man quietly and intently studied Lamarck and modelled, "on the lips," poems that only remotely, if at all, expressed his personal tragedy. I can say little about this new translation by David McDuff except that it's the only present English edition with facing Russian texts.[9] The translations may be compared (in a few instances) with those of Markov and Sparks in *Modern Russian Poetry* (McGibbon & Kee, 1966) and with Clarence Brown and W. S. Merwin's selected Mandelstam (Atheneum, 1974). Of this extraordinary and often very difficult poet, the more translations we have the better chance there is of clarifying his tragic and incorruptible lyricism. David McDuff's introduction is an excellent review of partly familiar biographical material; in his Notes he has happily quoted an admirably succinct definition of Mandelstam's "obscurity," by the Soviet literary critic, P. Gromov.

> ". . . Mandelstam's poems are unthinkable without their concreteness, and yet this very concreteness constantly and persistently 'grows trans-

[8] SPAIN, TAKE THIS CUP FROM ME, by *Cesar Vallejo*. Trans. by *Clayton Eshleman* and *José Rubia Barcia*. Grove Press. $10.00.

[9] OSIP MANDELSTAM: SELECTED POEMS. Trans. by *David McDuff*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. $10.00; PB 3.95.

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parent', breaks its limits in the objective world. The objects themselves seem penetrated by spiritualistic sources, cease to be objects and therefore begin to alarm the reader with a strange, paradoxical incorporeality."

I cannot praise too highly Robert Bly's translated selections from three Swedish poets.[10] To render Swedish poetry adequately into English, one must supply a season of inflections left out of the original climate. Harry Martinsson (b.1904) is a passionate nature poet whose personal knowledge, won early and with hardship, of life on farms, in forests and on the sea leavened his idyllic verse with a pragmatic appraisal of the contradictions between nature undefiled and the necessary ravage of commerce. His poems not infrequently trade in contrast: snowfalls of cotton "wrapping the world in the fur of the new necessities"; steeldecks and mortars invading the vine trails of the Congo; a cattleship meeting a private yacht; a smoking coalboat fading on the horizon while "The lonely jelly fish who has no history rocks around/ with burning blue feet." But Martinsson is primarily the poet of the lonely creature, the lonely place—lovers, earthworms, silent cattle.

> Winterspring, night fall, thawing.
> Boys have lit a candle in a snowball house.
> For the man in the evening train that rattles past,
> it is a red memory surrounded by gray time;
> calling, calling, out of stark woods just waking up.
> And the man who was travelling never got home,
> his life stayed behind, held by that lantern and that hour.
>
> ("March Evening")

These are sad, pellucid poems from a great-hearted man. . . . The late Gunnar Ekelöf was a horse of another color: as Bly accurately observes, "the intellectual, oblique, arrogant, nervous, witty poet of the centers of civilisation." And there's more to it. Ekelöf was a classic example of the neurotic who totally rejects, in a successive life-long flight, his dreadful parents, his home, his country, his ethnic society: cuts off, in short, the bough on which he stands. A déraciné, Ekelöf typically embraced a species of mysticism which, if consistently followed, should have made it unnecessary for him to write poetry at all; it ratified his psychogenic aversion to "appearances," his aloof and withering abjuration of Western man and his tiresome body. As a life attitude, Ekelöf's despotically unattached individualism can lead only to the void: as a nebulous center for fabricating poetry, it served the purposelessness of his purpose. Most of the poems are enthralling . . . . . Tomas Tranströmer (b.1931) is spiritual cousin to both the above: son to a line of skerry pilots, he shares Martinsson's orientation to the destructive element; alienated

[10] FRIENDS, YOU DRANK SOME DARKNESS. Three Swedish Poets chosen and translated by *Robert Bly*. A Seventies Press Book. Beacon. $8.95.

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by the stucco materialism of Swedish social democracy, he tends, like Ekelöf, to see all social phenomena as phantasmal. He is neither as healthy as Martinsson nor as transcendental as Ekelöf; much of the time he's surreal. A comment on the illusions people sustain of themselves is his "Solitude, II," in which he smugly compares the peace of Sweden with places where "people are born, live and die/ in a constant human crush./ To be visible all the time—to live/ in a swarm of eyes—/ surely that leaves its mark on the face./ Features overlaid with clay. . . . " Nowhere in the world have I seen features *more* overlaid with clay than in Sweden!—precisely because a *living* face is one that attempts to recognize its neighbor in the human crush! I like Tranströmer best when, as in "Sailor's Tale," he revives the spookiness of the winter solstice, driven from the Swedish surround by those high-rise tombstones they call towns. This book, handsomely printed, may be read either for its exposures of the Far North soul or for its intrinsic value as poetry. Mr. Bly has done a good thing.

Five American poets follow: intensely capable, sensitive to the doom of the Old Place. Since I've reviewed Josephine Miles' poems elsewhere, I'll just take brief advantage to recap my belief that "To All Appearances" (keep your eye on the title as you read her) is a noteworthy publication,[11] especially for critics who may have taken Miss Miles too readily at her own word in the past: the empiricist prepared to eliminate from her verse all the felicities save those of the denotative voice. She had her tongue in her cheek. Among the new poems in this collection are some scarlet with indignation, if you read them properly. Miss Miles is excruciatingly personal, never solipsistic; she is engagé but not yours for the keeping; her accent is mid-west; she sees ghost goal-keepers.

Confirming the forceful character of her first volume, Judith Hemschemeyer's second is focused, with an eye one is tempted to name as that of a basilisk, on childhood (or adolescent) nostalgia and adult pain, revised by the black incantations of retrospect: self-consoling, self-mocking, somewhat sharp-edged, nervous as a lizard.[12] This new collection is perhaps less imposing than the earlier by the absence from it of poems reflecting the glimpsed pageant and tragedy of Europe. Lacking that grand flaming theme, Miss Hemschemeyer does time in the Great American Desert, salvaging what she may from the domestic backward glance and the personal tribulation. She will never be judged tentative, that's for certain; the scathing purity of her imagination guarantees a resolute future development.

There's a place where Miss Hemschemeyer and Maura Stanton[13] intersect (a layer of flint) united by gusts of bitterness and sheerly female impatience with men or emotion or genetics. Hemschemeyer's "The Unicorn," "To My Rival," "Toward the End," "So in my Dream" and "Out

[11] TO ALL APPEARANCES, by *Josephine Miles*. University of Illinois. $8.95.

[12] VERY CLOSE AND VERY SLOW, by *Judith Hemschemeyer*. Wesleyan University. $6.00.

[13] SNOW ON SNOW, by *Maura Stanton*. Yale University. $6.00; PB $1.95.

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of Sync" seem to have their malign source in the same zones of resentment and self-immolation that inspired Stanton's "The All-Night Waitress," "Unwell," "Judith Recalls Holofernes," or the humid desolation of those poems that make up "Extracts from the Journal of Elisa Lynch" (the Irish mistress of a Paraguayan dictator, who died in Parisian exile): "Skin is the only safe country. . . . The route across anywhere is scrub forest/ gaudy with snakes and headhunters." Distinctions ensue. Miss Stanton is rather more successful in translating her asperity, eluding the autobiographical outrage that trembles in Hemschemeyer's "The Carpenter," "I'm Trying" and "A Letter." A comparison with Sylvia Plath may be alarming yet it is, I think, inevitable: here is the same imperilled hermeticism, the same wizard capacity for transmuting an inner nightmare (of frigidity, metamorphosis, explosion) in a coherent but exotic complex of images, often under the aspect of the mythopeic memory. At incandescent junctures, the always beautifully integrated poem threatens to consume itself in its own tranquil fury; it never does: the crisis, dire and insupportable, finds its agonized, mollifying musical resolution, as at the end of "Ophelia":

> If I twined myself with greens, with weeds,
> he'd never discover how deep inside my thicket
> I've escaped my rare womanly blooms; or how
> forever I'm only the sandswept desert,
> pitiless, listening to the sphere's wild music
> only I can translate, but I won't! I won't!

The best of these poems must have emerged from lavas of stress, cooled into order by a ruthless act of will and by a vital unconsciousness that provides the poet with bizarre visions revealing, as in one place she expresses it, "catastrophe in all its moral delight." Curiously, there are level patches, to put it less than cleverly, where Miss Stanton is in the territory of Richard Hugo, most notably in "Going Back." Cadence as well as substance is coincidentally kin.

> . . . . The boxcars
> Remind you this is home, the corset factory
> making steel ball bearings, the St. Charles Hotel
> crammed with old men who watch the tracks:
> Who won't believe in ghosts except themselves.
> . . . .
> You wonder if you're turning ghost yourself,
> haunting your past like snow on snow.

I have never read a poem else that had the singular intonation of Hugo's,[14] although many have been written to commemorate a moribund

[14] WHAT THOU LOVEST WELL, REMAINS AMERICAN, by *Richard Hugo*. W. W. Norton. $6.95; PB $2.50.

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tract of America lying beyond, you'd suppose, the probability of poetry. The color, gray, is as omnipresent in Hugo as snow is in Maura Stanton's verse. But her snow is a shifting symbol, whereas gray in Hugo's world is insistently gray. The woman speaking his introductory poem, "A Snapshot of the Auxiliary" (i.e. St. James Lutheran Womens' Auxiliary) forecasts the moral pigment of Hugo's dirt-road Americans. ". . .That gray/in the photo was actually their faces./On gray days we reflected weather color./ Lutherans did that. It made us children of God." Hugo does marvels with the flat tone, all the more effective when he imperceptibly deserts it and rides the wind. There are forty-seven poems in this collection and I've indecisively marked two dozen as indispensable for quotation. These I settled on, after picking them out of a hat.

> Cruelty and rain could be expected.
> Any season. The talk was often German
> and we cried at the death of strangers.
> Potatoes mattered and neighbors who came
> to marvel at our garden. I never helped
> with the planting. I hid in woods these houses
> built on either side replaced. . . .
>
> ("The House on 15th S.W.)

> The empty lot is where a house burned down.
> Shriek of siren. Red on cloud. The suicide.
> Every March, the orchard's vivid repair.
> The good were quick getting out of here.
> For others the sea, a short mile on the map,
> was a long way. Water was tattered
> by the time they arrived, shiplanes out
> clogged with kelp and debris.
>
> ("A Snapshot of 15th S.W.)

> You remember the name was Jensen. She seemed old
> Always alone inside, face pasted gray to the window,
> and mail never came. Two blocks down, the Grubskis
> went insane. George played rotten trombone
> Easter when they flew the flag. Wild roses
> remind you the roads were gravel and vacant lots
> the rule. Poverty was real, wallet and spirit,
> and each day slow as church. . . .
>
> ("What Thou Lovest Well, Remains American")

> I like bars close to home and home run down,
> a signal to the world, I'm weak. I like a bar
> to be a home. Take this one. Same men every night.
> Same jokes. Traffic going by
> fifteen feet away and punchboards never paying off.
>
> ("The Hilltop")

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Places where life never gets started or, monotone, goes on forever; places where lonely men commit unsolved murders, or believe they have. Hugo is writing American gothic, if you don't identify that with Grant Wood's two-dimensional picture. His poetry is much more than formalized naturalism; the visible is compelling; the invisible remains supreme. Riding a frozen flatcar south from Tacoma; driving through Jerome, a broken-limbed township mile-high above the Tonto rim; bedrolled on the outskirts of Selma, Butte or Gallup—who has not quickened to an effluence which is extrinsic to the actual scene, imposed on it perhaps by one's own fear that a landscape, or a community so-called, cannot endure without an ambience contrived by one's own flights of imagining, composed from the detritus and the shadows of these wastelands where history never happend? Abhorring a vacuum, the poet rushes in. He peoples the gray air. And who can envision a future less gray than the past? ". . .Speed law: safe and sane./ Real speed: blinding. Real chance to make it: none. . . ." And one more American peers into the driving snow, seeing only another last trail. "Invasion North" is half facetious—conquest by any army of women from the sky—but the quiet opening sentence—"They looked soft floating down"—prepares the authentic chill in the last stanza.

> Of the entire garrison, I am the only survivor.
> Lord, it's cold, wandering this ice alone. My radio
> still works. The conquering women have offered me
> the captain's skeleton, have promised amnesty
> if I come in. They broadcast every day at noon
> and again at nine on clear nights. They must think
> I'm a fool. I've developed a terrible arsenal
> in case I'm taken and I've stockpiled berries,
> roots and dry meat, enough to last fifty years.

The three preceding poets have had to pluck up or come to terms with their grass roots before freely inhabiting a further subject. David Slavitt[15] suffers from no such disability; child of the Eastern seaboard, and much more, he has no wilderness to exorcize. His ironic humanism is the beneficiary of three sources: his Hebraic ancestry, his education in the classical tongues and his New England residence. These divide fairly equally his interests as a poet; nearly all the contingent subjects in this copious collection (186 poems, of which 83 are designated *New Poems*) are broadly accounted for by his triple inheritance. From it he has derived a sense of tragic futility in human pretensions, acquired poise, learned patience—and adopted cynicism enough to acknowledge, with Dr. Johnson, that "Nonsense we can live with is better than truth." (He never writes nonsense.) I don't know exactly what Joyce Carol Oates meant when she said, in praise, that "the near-ubiquitous voice of the era seems generally absent in Slavitt" (I'm not even sure how many poets speak with that voice!). Ubiquity is Slavitt's occupational hazard, more often his glory. He handles forensic issues as deftly as the private grief and there's scarcely a

[15] VITAL SIGNS, by *David R. Slavitt*. Doubleday. $6.95.

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contemporary shibboleth (tourism, high-jackers, Western movies, Plymouth Rock, the welfare state, militant women) at which he doesn't cast an eye: not a cold one; the labor he delights in physics cold. The contemporary mind, expecially in the U.S.A., is unable to conceive that intellectual disenchantment is not synonymous with the absence of lively curiosity. The iniquities of history and the tiresome rebirth of True Believers need not affect our reconciliation with life, nor prevent our recognizing that all recovery is a necessary illusion. In the long run Slavitt agrees with Ortega: "To say that we live is the same as saying that we find ourselves in an atmosphere of definite possibilities." (Note especially "The Clearing" or the poem that supplies the title to this volume, where the poet stares into the "unpatched eye" of pain's "private face," "looking for company, for comfort, vital signs.").

If Slavitt would rather be a hammer than a nail, he knows how the nail feels but his compassion is restrained by the shrewd inference that few mortals deserve compassion. How to quote adequately from Slavitt is a problem. He's his own man, as Miss Oates remarked, yet he speaks with divers tongues. Beside those I indicated, his points of departure include the siege of Jericho, Mozart dying, Peter Pan chez Freud, Istanbul, Bath and Rome, the dubious origin of Lima beans, the woman-drubbed American husband, Leonidas of Tarentum, Cambyses, hurricanes, dead tanagers, crocuses and whales. He inhabits history and the world of poetic forms as playfully as an otter its fluvial element; with no audible panting, he commands a diversity of stanzaic constructs and syllabic line-counts, tosses off ballads, sestinas, sonnets, *ottava rima,* dramatic monologues in unrhymed strophes of varying meters. Something like a duality, but not quite, offers itself to the intent reader: salvation as Odysseus or as Candide—the crafts of cutting loose or of cultivating one's garden, which amount to the same thing: art. From "Day Sailing":

> it is compromise between the wind
> and me, a settling for that bluff, that flagpole,
> and tacking back, beating up the wind,
> achieving direction out of indirection;
> it is balancing, my weight
> to windward, heeling to leeward;
>
> it is a triumph, for civilisation is
> neither writing, nor painting pictures, nor forging metal,
> nor breeding animals, nor sowing grain,
> but sailing into the wind, sailing to westward,
> the knowing, the craft.

(or, on another day; this from "Weeding, Florida, January"):

> To hell with Darwin,
> survival of fittest, the idea of the marketplace
> of ideas. In this, my *orangerie,*
> I will establish my own order, will promote
> excellence, pursue grace, till my nails

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are black with killing, pinching off opportunity,
maintaining inequality

I don't know if anyone recognizes that in Slavitt Americans have their own Cavafy, their own Auden. That's much to have (and the poet is only forty-four). I regret the absence of space in which to quote him more generously. Unable to get off-stage without another summarizing flourish from the man, himself, I have discarded many loftier possibilities. This, I think, speaks as well for Slavitt as any (from "Clam Digging"):

I labor on, greedy to fill my bucket
with grace, with bounty, but willing to settle for clams.

A decent regard for what should be honored in a class now passing from sight, together with a sensible disdain for all petty colonialisms of the spirit: this ambivalence is richly disposed in certain poems by Richard Murphy.[16] In loving memory of his "grandmother, Lucy Mary Ormsby, whose home was in the west of Ireland, 1873-1958," Murphy has written a moving elegy of a woman who would have liked to win admiration for her journals but instead created art by lifelong acts of hospitality.

The undeveloped thoughts died in her head,
But from her heart, through the people she loved
Images spread, and intuitions lived,
More than the mere sense of what she said.

The bards in their beds once beat out ballads
Under leaky thatch listening to sea-birds,
But she in the long ascendancy of rain
Served biscuits on a tray with ginger wine.
("The Women of the House")

Another governor at sunset, repudiated by history, was the poet's father who, retired from the Colonial Service, established a farm in Africa and, subsequently, a school for native children. Murphy celebrates him in "The God Who Eats Corn," a meticulous balancing act in which the poet drums the stepchildren of Livingstone out of Southern Rhodesia while paying proper respect to men who did what they could and more than was required of them in the face of hostile nature, brute policy and the bloody issues of rising expectations. Most of Murphy's poems chronicle a lost cause or an incommensurate effort—appropriately Irish subjects. Liberality of mind served by native eloquence employing its aged-in-peat glossary enable the poet to exalt a poetic line of any length and meter with language that confers on it the affectionate bounce and wit of Celtic derision. Here is a fourteen-year-old in "The Reading Lesson."

He looks at a page as a mule balks at a gap
From which a goat may hobble out and bleat.
His eyes jink from a sentence like flushed snipe

[16] HIGH ISLAND. by *Richard Murphy*. Harper & Row. $6.95.

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Escaping shot. A sharp word and he'll mooch
Back to his piebald mare and bantam cock.
Our purpose is as tricky to retrieve
As mercury from a smashed thermometer.

Implacably Irish readers will no doubt elect "The Battle of Aughrim" as the grandest poem in this collection; it's an ambitious exercise, twenty-seven poems and two prose pieces, executed with a fine multiplicity of techniques. Yet, without wishing to take back from Murphy any praise I've given, I'd say the suite is less effective than George Mackay Brown's far shorter poem, "The Battle of Culloden." (My comparison is flattering. Brown is a master and if you love him you'll love Murphy.) The greater part of this volume has its setting on and around the fishing waters of Western Ireland, where the poet lives (when he's not teaching in the U.S.A.) and for my ear the most resonant poetry will be found in "The Cleggan Disaster" (of 1927, when a Judgment Day storm claimed twenty-five boatloads of men and left one man blinded). This is Concannon, felled to the deck by "three cliffs of waves."

While he lay there stunned, he remembered the sea
In the tar-melting sunlight, dry weed on the thwarts,
The gills of mackerel tight in the meshes,
Hot stench of dead fish in the bailer.
And the planks gaping wide, and the thole-pins screeching,
The lines like lathes grooving the gunwales

The values of a poet are clearly dependent on the company we ask him to keep. To read the poems of Ronald Bottrall,[17] as I have been, after the amplitude of David Slavitt, the arctic intimations of Hugo or the gear-and-tackle, "relics and rowlocks" of Murphy's intensified verse, is to experience (perhaps unfairly) a woeful thinness, a remoteness from the body of man and, here and there, an embarrassingly Edwardian testiness in the poet's lamentations (justifiable) on the subject of the drug culture, environmental pollution and the imbecile daily life of Rome. As an admirer of Cavafy and a disciple of W. H. Auden, however, Bottrall gathers a margin of credit, even though he falls short of his masters; he catches their tone, he's familiar with their line of country (city, I *should* say!). For years, in the shadow of Auden and of poets more lenient to contemporary chaos, Bottrall has been an elegant champion of the civilised amenities and an unappeasable foe to the rotters who wage and lose our wars, vandalize our language, toss bombs at our morally defenseless institutions. For this we owe him thanks. Bottrall is worst when being very lyrical or very angry; best when damning with a soft pedal but a firm accent. "Weep not for Dylan Dead" is something else, a splendid villanelle; a stoic chanting as he burns at the stake. Where the sheer lack of lyric density of a kind Bottrall

[17] POEMS 1955–1973, by *Ronald Bottrall,* Anvil Press (Serendipity Books, Berkeley). £2.95; Paper £1.50 (no American price given).

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needs shows up most is in his long dedicatory poem of family life in Cornwall, "Talking to the Ceiling." In it Bottrall *names things*, yet he writes prose. This memoir suffers desperately from the absence of brine—poetic tension, household coinage, the virility of elemental banalities transposed by idiom. One thing he does supremely well; he gets the color of an exotic latitude or an unlike personage, where and with whom his assumptions are not accommodated and his eye is free to assess the weirdly self-satisfied attitudes of the "foreigner." "Amazonian Scene" is delightful, and most of his Mediterranean pieces. I still think his masterpiece is "Hellenics" from which I extracted the Cavafy quotation, above.

No poet writing in England today has a closer, more recondite knowledge of the secret life in the non-human universe than Ted Walker.[18] In each of his four volumes to date, mystifyingly ignored by the poets and professors who compile our anthologies,[19] Walker has been contriving quiet, hair-raising (and musically precise) metaphors from his great gift for relating our inattentive senses to the cryptic features of animals, fish, birds—flowers, even—in which, if we paused to look (with *his* patience and his occult powers) we would see ourselves, or the wreck of ourselves, writ plain. A cautionary word. Walker does not on compulsion go hunting for similitudes; they arise naturally, or appear to, in the course of the poem, like a sudden tremor in tall grass as a fox shudders through before going to earth. Of moths: "They linger with harm in them/ underneath the streetlamp's hum;/ criminal with loneliness/ they sip the evening yellowness. . . ." Of crocuses: ". . . briefly we pause; regret/ the vacant seemliness/ by which we live. For which we lost/ that proper, vital gift of waste/ whereby the one-day crocus dies." Of Homing Pigeons: ". . .All their lives are goings-back/ from places where they have not flown./ Alien they seem. Yet / in their brief apportionment/ of flight—a timed parole—/ is sensed that homing force that drives/ us back from any fanciful/ hovering beyond our lives. . . ." Of Mules (i.e. war mules, now idle): ". . .Always the sight of them compels/ the memory of what we are. / A newsreel of a distant war/ that flickers in our room recalls/ a savage, wasting sense in us;. . . . We know ourselves wise,/ mastering violence; but sometimes,/ dimly, we sense other wisdoms—/ *he totally lives who dies / imminently; those eyes/ only that see with terror see.* . . ." Italics are not mine. They express the poet's deepest conviction, plain to sight and feeling as we move from poem to poem. Walker is knowledgeably certain that life feeds on life; that our civil existence, for which he has a fully human respect, is purchased at the price of being witlessly outside the skin of things. He is nervously aware of blood under the fingernails, tyrannically, sensitive to the creep and push of seasons, something only a country-dwelling man would be alive to and suffer from or exult in—marvelling at our loss.

[18] GLOVES TO THE HANGMAN, by *Ted Walker*. Jonathan Cape; PB. No American price given.

[19] The workaday world has been more astute. Many of Walker's poems have been published in *The New Yorker* and *The Listener* and his work has been subject of a BBC Third Program.

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Gloves to the Hangman is a reprinted collection but Walker's previous co-publisher in America did not collaborate, which implies an indifferent reception heretofore. From an extraordinary occasion in 1386 when the tribunal of Falaise sentenced to mangling and death a sow which had savaged a child, comes the title of this volume. "As if to make the travesty of justice complete, the sow was dressed in man's clothes and executed on the public square. . . .at an expense to the state of ten sous and ten deniers, besides a pair of gloves to the hangman." "*Pig, pig*" is a work of brutal impact, brilliantly spoken in a sadistic idiom, yet I'd prefer to quote as much of a whole poem as possible from Walker, the major share of "Polecats in Breconshire." I include the first stanza because it's so irresistibly euphonic.

> Fine moths dropped from the darkness,
> drifted like fallings of swarf
> to dust the grasses whitely
> where whitely flew the first scarf
> of an owl as quiet as wool.
> . . . .
> Seldom glimpsed by a human—
> except, perhaps, at evening
> by lonely widow-women
> musty as old whinberries—
>
> they loped for no enemy
> they knew. Over the bracken
> they leaped free; among the few,
> too few to count, five of them ran
> their bodies smooth in the dew.
>
> And all the while there was night
> they would shark through the thickets,
> incising behind the skull
> beasts that would be the pellets
> of their pleasure. Armoured with
>
> stench, and teeth to score tungsten,
> they would slummock on fat eels.
> On some road the good mother
> would suckle her whelps. I would wonder
> what they were, under my wheels.

"Musty as old whinberries"; "shark through the thickets"; "armoured with stench"; "slummock on fat eels."

Hughes, Larkin, Redgrove. They're good. Are they this good?

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WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

The Hermeneutical Mafia or, After Strange Gods at Yale

TWENTY AND MORE YEARS AGO William S. Buckley burst upon the scene with a book telling the world how Yale professors were Godless and Keynesian, believed neither in religion nor the further rise of capitalism. At present we observe, in the same academic sanctuary, comparable attempts to frisk students of their principles as naive or enthusiastic readers by proposing new, it may well be revolutionary, ways of reading poetry and criticism. In their New Haven precincts at least, literary study is no longer the relaxed appreciating of good books à la William Lyon Phelps or William DeVane (author of *A Browning Handbook*); nor the devoted explications of irony and paradox by Cleanth Brooks or Maynard Mack. The titles of these recent books by Geoffrey H. Hartman and Harold Bloom[1] suggest that very big game is being stalked, nothing less than the fate of reading, literature, the agonizingly problematical nature of poetry and its interpretation. Since the most common adjective used to describe their work is "brilliant," I shall accept that term as fair enough. But I propose here to look at a few of the brilliant sentences and paragraphs that make up their latest as well as earlier books, then to draw some conclusions about the world they invite us to enter and the style through which they engage it.

In reviewing Hartman's new book, Richard Poirier (*New York Times Book Review,* 20 April 1975) advised us that, along with his previous ones, particularly the essays collected in *Beyond Formalism* (1970), it asks to be "taken as part of a community enterprise meant to constitute the most significant challenge to literary studies since Northrop Frye and, before that, I. A. Richards." Besides Hartman's colleague Harold Bloom, the most prominent members of that community enterprise are two other colleagues, Paul deMan and J. Hillis Miller, whose works are equally well-known and who are often to be found giving papers and addresses at meetings of the M.L.A., the English Institute, and other professional organizations. When Poirier at one point in his review asks who the imagined audience is for Hartman's book, one barely supresses the thought that members of this community seem to be writing and speaking above all to each other.[2] This is understandable: they share a passion for

[1] THE FATE OF READING, by *Geoffrey H. Hartman.* University of Chicago. $15.00. A MAP OF MISREADING, by *Harold Bloom.* Oxford University. $8.95.

[2] *Beyond Formalism* was dedicated to Bloom; Bloom's collection of essays, *The Ringers in the Tower,* to Hartman. Hartman's new collection contains a review of Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence* ("this dense, eloquent and experiential brooding") while his previous one had a backcover blurb from Hillis Miller ("this admirable book, a subtle and long-mediated vision of literary history"). Paul deMan, the subtlest analyst and best writer of the community, publishes

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comparative literature and Continental philosophical, psychological and literary speculation; they read Derrida, Poulet, Lacan, and Blanchot; structuralism is mother's milk to them; eristics, hermeneutics and propadeutics no more than ordinary language at ordinary evenings in New Haven. And except for deMan, about whose preference I'm not sure, the supreme modern poet, the last word on all things visible and invisible is their necessary angel, Wallace Stevens.

Yet, and to confine things for the moment to Hartman's essays, this reader often feels desperate, wondering how he could possibly remake his life so as seriously to be touched by the problems the critic sees as troubling and exciting. In his lead essay ("The Interpreter") to the new book Hartman provides us with paragraphs about the excitements and dangers of "interrupting" a "text" (the Yale people always deal with texts, never mere books) and then discusses the "alternate" or "*déjà lu*" theory of describing our responses to individual works. Interpretation as "interruption" can be understood as "a shadowy double of the work of art," or, in the alternate theory

> . . . act and shadow are considered of equal dignity. Both, that is, reflect the possibility of a Heavenly City of Mutual Discourse. At the same time, the reactive or *a posteriori* character of interpretation, which includes its dependence on source texts, is questioned. The hermeneutic universe now envisaged is no longer a closed system, with Classics at the center, spin-off works as satellites, and the critic-interpreter either encouraging such spin-offs by denying exhaustive centrality to certain books (and so keeping the system expanding) or discouraging them (and inviting closure). "The stubborn center must/Be scattered . . ." (Shelley).
>
> There are disadvantages too, in terms of literary-critical *praxis*. (I do not try to judge the theory except in this light.) By diminishing the book-centeredness of literary discourse you bring it closer to philosophical discourse and run the risk of homogenizing it. True, you may still have "texts" rather than "books"—but what constitutes a text is a slippery thing to define, and the tendency of Heidegger to excerpt freely, of Derrida to use a highly repetitive or snippety canon, and of Lacan to meld everything into his prose by inner quotation produces an intensely frustrating *clair-obscur*. Theology also fragmented scripture into proof-texts, yet the literal text remained, and the discrepancy between letter and figurative development was the very space of revisionary shock or "hermeneutic reversal." Now, however, the *facticity* of a

relatively little compared to the others. Particularly unforgettable are moments in which one of the giants confronts another; I remember an English Institute Meeting at Columbia when, in the discussion period following on Bloom's talk, Miller rose to ask a question and was recognized by Bloom in some such terms as "my great antagonist" (or was it "mighty opposite"?). At such moments other academics in the room feel kind of humble and kind of proud.

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book or, the *force* of a "dialectical lyric" like Hölderlin's "Der Rhein" or Shelley's "Mont Blanc" or Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* may be lost.

Hartman has just referred, in his preface, to a certain group of critics that "justifies everything by the pragmatic test of the classroom, as if the world had to pass through that needle's eye, or as if a pedagogy accommodated to the pressures of a particular community were the best we could hope for." Nobody wants to be a miserable pragmatist, but I think the test of the classroom—of a good classroom that is, since they vary—would be less of a needle's eye than the aperture Hartman has constructed for us to get through in the above paragraphs. That is to say, anyone who spends any time in class with students is aware that whether you call the thing in front of you (or wherever it is) a "book" or a "text," you will be dealing with a slippery thing, and you will find it wise not to "define" it for more than a minute or two lest someone should interrupt you to say, no that is not it at all. We learned this pretty early along, as teachers or students, just as we learned that words are not things, art not life, the "unmediated vision" (the title of Hartman's first book) what isn't around to be had, or is to be had only in a world of abstraction. Hartman's abstracting is off-putting because of the style in which it's conducted: reactive spin-offs on the one hands, hermeneutics and closure on the other (or is it the same hand?) with a line from Shelley vainly stabbing at uniting them. To say nothing of *praxis* (practice?) and *clair-obscur* and *facticity* (equalled only by Bloom's favorite, *rhetoricity*). Taken together these, like other and even more striking overreachings in Hartman's style make up *clair-obscurs* that are intensely frustrating. Stop for a moment and ask yourself who in the world of readers—classroom or otherwise—"may" ever lose the facticity of Hölderlin's or Shelley's poems. Who ever had the facticity of Kierkegaard's difficult meditation to lose anyway? But we refer now to ordinary readers rather than these extraordinary troubled men of Yale.

Perhaps not all that troubled. Most of the time Hartman seems the opposite of anguished and not overburdened with, as he calls it, the fate of reading. *Beyond Formalism* contained a thick swatch of overwhelmingly learned essays on aspects of poetic language in Milton, Marvell, Blake, Wordsworth, Hopkins; the new book continues these interpretative performances with ones on Smart, Keats, Goethe and Valéry. I respect, and at times receive genuine pleasure and illumination from such essays, even though I find them written in never much less than a daunting style, and though the level at which they operate is refined perhaps beyond the point not merely of desirable but of civilized practice, in or out of the classroom. Still, such essays have a specifiable audience, one of academics whose favorite magazines are *New Literary History, ELH* and others less well-known to me. In this league, and it is a big enough league, Hartman is one of the very best players of the interpretive game; although if you are going to play it with him you must prepare yourself to read a footnote like the following to an essay on Akenside's "Ode to the Evening Star":

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> The preposition "to" in st. 1 foregrounds itself so strongly that, to subordinate it, one is tempted to read it on the pattern of "to-night" (i.e., proclitically) and so bring it closer to the bonded preposition "sub" in *supply, suppliant* (a near pun, anticipating the reversal mentioned above) and even *suffer*. Compare the syntax of st. 6; also the "prefer" of l. 19 which makes "vows" both its direct and indirect object. It draws attention once more not only to the prepositional but also to the syntactical bonding of one verse-line with another. All this fosters a sense of the discontinuous or precarious path followed by the verses' "feet." It is interesting that in Christopher Smart's *Song to David* (1763) the problem of hierarchy, subordination (hypotaxis), and prepositional-syntactical bonding reaches an acute stage.

This is not quite a grammarian's funeral but it sounds like it, and Hartman's most strenuous engagements with verbal matters (his earlier essay "The Voice of the Shuttle" shows them at their best) are forbiddingly couched so as to resist all but the most devoted reader—and of Dr. Mark Akenside to boot. And so when, in the title essay to *The Fate of Reading*, Hartman announces things like the following—"This indifference, an apathy or arbitrariness of emotional reaction, or an orgasmic shuttle of both together, remains a complex phenomenon"—the reader may very well conclude he'd rather be in Philadelphia. Whose indifferent apathy or arbitrary emotional reaction combined into which orgasmic shuttle is he supposed to care about? In case you accuse me of quoting out of context, be assured that the reference is to, in the preceding paragraph, "the activist potential of articulated or publicized thought, in whatever form."

In his review Poirier refers to Hartman's "sometimes gleeful unintelligibility," and the other review I've seen (Denis Donoghue's in *T.L.S.*, 29 Aug 1975) also admits to unhappiness with the critic's style. Both of them, though, are more forgiving of these lapses and more generous in their appreciation of Hartman's virtues than I can find myself to be; and neither reviewer evidently finds more than trivial faults, since neither mentions them, Hartman's misquoting of lines and his heavyhanded attempts at lightness of touch. "I admit to a variable style, which consists mainly of a playful dissolving of terms and abstractions . . ." he winks at us; but without systematic checking of his quotations my ear caught the following dissolvings of lines originally written otherwise. The examples are from his two books of essays, and I specify the poet misquoted: "As flies to wanton boys, so are we to the gods" (Shakespeare); "The forward Youth that would appear/ Must forsake his muses dear," (Marvell); "blanket of the night" (Shakespeare); "a road not taken" (Frost); "The best lack all conviction, and the worst are full of passionate intensity" (Yeats); "Soldier, there is a war between the mind and the sky" (Stevens); plus the invention of Stevens-titles like "The Snowman" and "L'Esthetique du Mal." I don't mean to claim that Hartman is in Stephen Spender's league in the misquoting stakes (see the latter's *Love-Hate Relations* for the champion book in this respect) but what these errors sug-

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gest to me is that his ear for the rhythm and tone of individual lines of poetry is a good deal less secure than his formidable ability to spin words around them. He gives us the ritual or Continental business about how "complex" it is "to decide where a text ends or begins," then seems to find it similarly complex to decide whether or not accurate quotation is worthwhile.

His "playful" style is even more bothersome: "Is criticism a yea, yea, nay nay affair, best conducted in as dry a prose as possible?" No, professor, it is not, but the alternative to dryness needn't be the following bit of liveliness from "History Writing as Answerable Style": "Our hearts are sad at the culture supermarket; packaged historical reminiscences meet us everywhere; the Beatles' *Yellow Submarine* is a moving toyshop of topoi." Hartman's invoking of 1960's pop has the effect of too-eagerly assuring us that an erudite fellow like him can relax too. And like pop like feminism: "It is proper to recall here Pope's wittily sexist observation that 'Women have no character at all.' " But of course it is highly improper, because Pope never wrote a line close to the one Hartman invents, nor did the author of "Epistle to a Lady" make (like Johnny Carson, say) "wittily sexist" remarks. "But let me damp my superciliousness" he nervously intrudes into his essay "On the Theory of Romanticism," and in the acknowledgments to *The Fate of Reading* salutes his wife who "occasionally tried to chasten my style." Mrs. Hartman must have desisted or nodded during the title essay when her spouse got on to the following conceit:

> The point is . . . that sexuality is simply a pointing. If you don't get the point, there is little one can do. You fear castration, and you hover compulsively, emptily, near that point. "Omne tulit punctum" said horny Horace. A promiscuous metaphor is better than a faceless literalism. So Freud moves on, winning his point.

Such depressing highjinks is I'm convinced a consequence of Hartman's desire to expatiate on all sorts of non-subjects (like The Fate of Reading) we can well live without investigating. At any rate the playful style has its grim corollary in the unanswerable one, as when the historical space between Hegel and Greece "is less the space of mystery than of interpretation: it is hermeneutic as well as pneumatic. Hegel stands here on the threshold of the passage from *Gesitergeschichte* to *Gesitesgeschichte.*" "No man is an island (except some Englishmen)" he wittily remarks at one point, and I rejoin, standing there on the threshold with the abominable Hegel and his hermeneutics, Give me Leavis, nay give me Grigson, nay give me Clive James even. Or just give me an American like William James who said in 1882 that "Hegel's philosophy mingles mountain-loads of corruption with its scanty merits."

But let us turn instead to Harold Bloom, introducing him through Hartman's summary of Bloom's argument in *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973). Since I do not believe, as Bloom claims in his dedication, that the new *A*

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Map of Misreading should be understood as "an antithetical completion" to the earlier book, I take Hartman's description to be still accurate:

> [Each essay from] . . . this dense, eloquent and experiential brooding . . . defines what is called a "revisionary ratio," that is, a specific type of "misreading" which helps poets to overcome the influence of previous poets. Influence is understood as dangerously preemptive (hence the anxiety), as an in-flowing that tends to become a flooding, so that for the later poet to survive means to wilfully revise (euphemistically, "correct") his precursor. . . . Bloom seeks "a wholly different practical criticism" which would transfigure source-study by revealing in each poem, or in the poet's corpus as a whole, echoings of a precursor, imitations as complex as those by which the child wrests his life-space from parents.

Assuming most readers of this magazine will by now be somewhat familiar with this argument, at least in its compressed form, and because the bypaths Bloom pursues can't be adequately paraphrased or charted (is he not, in his own terms, a Strong Poet?), I shall inquire instead whether Bloom's "wholly different practical criticism" as practiced by himself, delivers the goods so loudly promised by his theoretical performance.

First though, it is silly to pretend that anyone comes to Bloom's work with a wholly open mind, ready somehow objectively to weigh the evidence, then "agree" or "disagree." From the beginning of his productions as a critic he has made no pretence to open-mindedness or fairness. Like Robert Graves in only one respect (Graves who was reprimanded by his Oxford tutor for preferring some books to others) Bloom has from the start been polemical, even pugilistic. My own reading of him began with *Shelley's Mythmaking* (1959), an intemperate, exaggerated defense of Shelley against which I had to examine my inert received notions (received from Leavis, alas) of how Shelley's poetry would not do at all. More recently Bloom's book on Yeats energetically combated received opinion about the Yeats canon and his status as a great poet. And *The Ringers in the Tower* (1971) contained strongly-argued essays on Keats, Shelley, appreciations of Ruskin and Pater as literary men, good accounts of Robinson, Hart Crane and an extremely useful one of Stevens' "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction." (Prolific as he is, Bloom is not yet the author of what the dust jacket to *Ringers* credited him with, a book called *Wallace Stevens: The Poems of Our Climate.*)

On the basis of his published work then, Bloom seems most himself and most engaging as a proselytizer for neglected, misvalued or imperfectly understood creative work—mainly poetry—produced by English and American writers—mainly since 1800. As a provocative spokesman he needs constantly to be argued with, but this is good for a reader's faculties and provides an experience different in kind from most academic assays. And there are passages in Bloom's latest books where he indulges in sweeping annoyances which seem to me to make for health and life—as

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when in *Anxiety of Influence* he excoriates "the anti-humanistic plain dreariness of all these developments in European criticism that have yet to demonstrate that they can aid in reading any one poem by any one poet whatsoever." He is also, at moments, less than absolute for his own theory, suggesting at the beginning of *Map of Misreading* that the theory's truth may be irrelevant to its usefulness for practical criticism; though perhaps this disclaimer permits him all the more to be extravagant in unqualifiedly setting forth the reader's situation: "Reading, despite all humanist traditions of education, is very nearly impossible, for every reader's relation to every poem is governed by a figuration of belatedness." Is there any point in saying that some of us old-fashioned humanists thought coming late to the poem—sometime well after it was written—was what made reading *possible* as well as necessary? But with "very nearly impossible," the bold formulation takes itself back just enough for safety's sake.

Of course one feels less than magnanimous in asking such commonsense questions since, as Bloom has said in *Anxiety,* "strong poets can only read themselves. For them, to be judicious is to be weak, and to compare, exactly and fairly, is to be not elect." From his writing, I presume Bloom has taken this admonition to heart, and that strong critics also must abjure these weaker virtues. How it applies to style is revealed through his quoting, of all people, the Elizabethan rhetorician George Puttenham on the "far-fetcher" trope—"as when we had rather fetch a word a great way off than to use one nearer hand to expresse the matter aswel and plainer . . . so . . . leaping over the heads of a great many words, we take one that is furdest off, to utter our matter by. . . ." An example from the new book, in which Bloom proposes to consider "a Post-Enlightenment crisis-lyric of major ambitions and rare achievement, wholly in the abstract," must suffice to illustrate how faithfully he has followed up Puttenham's tip:

> Applying the Lurianic dialectics to my own litany of evasions, one could say that a breaking-of-the-vessels always intervenes between every *primary* (limiting) and every *antithetical* (representing) movement that a latecomer's poem makes in relation to a precursor's text. When the latecomer initially swerves (clinamen) from his poetic father, he brings about a contraction or withdrawal of meaning from the father, and makes/breaks his own false creation (fresh wandering or error-about-poetry). The answering movement, *antithetical* to this *primary,* is the link called *tessera,* a completion that is also an opposition, or restorer of some of the degrees-of-difference between ancestral text and the new poem. This is the Lurianic pattern of *Zimzum→Shevirath ha-kelim→Tikhun,* and is enacted again (in finer tone) in the next dialectical pair of ratios, *kenosis* (or undoing as discontinuity) and *daemonization* (the breakthrough to a personalized Counter-Sublime).

The paragraph (and the "analysis") goes on, but I cease to quote, only admitting that Bloom in one of his many maddening incorporations of

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Wallace Stevens' lines into his own prose calls what he is doing here "the accomplishment of an extremist in an exercise." Hartman finds these terms "exuberantly eclectic," and I suppose one might revel in the high-spirits of such extremity since there is certainly no point in objecting to what looks like deliberate devilishness. Yet when later on Bloom confides (to whom? the elect?) that "I will try to remember that the common reader cares little to be taught to notice tropes or defenses," it may well be hazarded that this common reader, not necessarily to be despised, would more willingly submit to such instruction if it were expressed in English.

When Bloom gets round to considering post-Englishtenment crisis-lyrics in the concrete they still sound pretty abstract. An important exhibit is Wordsworth's Immortality Ode and its relation to the precursor, Milton. Here is a sample from Bloom's commentary on stanzas I-IV of the poem:

> The first part begins with images of absence, the realm of "there was a time." There is an *illusio* here, for though Wordsworth actually fears that a Glory has passed away from himself, he says it has passed from the earth. As a defense, this reaction-formation wards off instinctual impulses by means of that mode of self-distrust that creates the super-ego. Poetically, instinctual impulses are internalized influences from a precursor-fixation, and Wordsworth's selfdistrust reacts therefore to Milton's strength. "Intimations" in the title means something very like "signs" or "tokens" and the title therefore suggests that the poem is a searching for evidences, almost a quest for election. The precursor poem, in a deep sense, is Milton's *Lycidas,* and Wordsworth's Ode also is intended primarily to be a dedication to the poet's higher powers, a prolepsis of the great epic he hoped still to write. But that intention, though it will determine the poem's final attempt at a transumptive stand towards Milton, seems largely negated by much of the poem's first two movements.

This writing veers uneasily from loose, "ordinary" language—Wordsworth "reacting" to Milton, the poem "almost" a quest for election (all Romantic poems are of course, for Bloom, Quests), *Lycidas* being the precursor "in a deep sense"—to psychoanalytic paraphrase, for which the ideal reader is clearly Vladimir Nabokov, and finally to the shiny terms wheeled out for inspection—transumption and prolepsis and more to follow. But there is precious little about the "movements" of Wordsworth's poem at the level of voice and diction, and nothing about them at the level of sound, pace, rhythm—the level at which everything is heard. The "strong" way of writing about poems is often a barbarous and sometimes a bathetic way. "I am myself an uneasy quester after lost meanings" says the on-stage troubled critic, sinking as he speaks.

Moreover, to be strong is to bully, and especially there to be bullied is that common reader who needs to be told who is better than whom. For example: Browning, we learn from Bloom's headnote in the *Oxford Anthology of English Literature*, surpasses not only his rival Tennyson but all

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modern poets "including even Yeats, Hardy, and Wallace Stevens, let alone the fashionable modernists whose reputations are now rightly in rapid decline." What must be said to this is Nonsense, Eliot's reputation is in decline of no sort, except in Bloom's head; and nonsense it is too to talk about Browning's "surpassing" the other moderns we care most about and whose work helped us shuck off Browning. (This is heresy, I am aware; I have also read Browning recently with some care, and he surpasses neither these modern poets nor Tennyson.) But at the least such big talk should be backed up by practical criticism of Browning's work; instead Bloom offers us in the new book yet a further analysis of "Childe Roland"—he had analyzed it twice before, once in *Ringers,* once in *Anxiety*—proving once more to his own satisfaction that it is a great quest poem.

The large-mannered motions Bloom makes in the directions of poems often seem not very practical criticism at all, indeed not very critical. I could not begin to quote the numbers of times lines or phrases from Wallace Stevens are woven into Bloom's sentences, as they are into Hartman's, the allusions never ironic (as in the one I commited just above) but rather celebratory and reverential. Though not quite as "great" as Browning, Stevens now seems to be beyond any attention other than devoted construing and quoting as "proof" of the critic's high argument. So even a minor, pleasant little poem like "The Rabbit as King of the Ghosts" becomes (in *Anxiety*) an example of poetic *askesis* which "compensates for the poet's involuntary shock at his own daemonic expansiveness. Without askesis, the strong poet, like Stevens, is fated to become the rabbit as king of the ghosts." And after quoting some lines which end with "You become a self that fills the four corners of night," Bloom adds "Humped high, humped up, the poet will become a carving in space unless he can wound himself *without further emptying himself of his inspiration.* He cannot afford another *kenosis.*" Proceeding in this vein, Bloom turns what I as common reader had thought was Stevens indulgence of the rabbit's momentary grandeur into (it turns out to be instead) a cautionary tale for the modern strong poet who needs a good dose of askesis to counteract his kenosis. In the process, not only has the individual poem been ransacked, its pleasantly-odd language ("Humped high, humped up") wrenched out of the poet's context into the critic's (the word "carving," which doesn't occur in the Rabbit poem, may have been borrowed for the occasion from "The Auroras of Autumn" where "The necklace is a carving, not a kiss") and the whole business humped very high indeed.

Space forbids my pursuing further examples of what strikes me as huffing and puffing rather than demonstration. But I will refer to an instance of such in *Misreading* when Hardy's final book, *Winter Words,* is put forth as a "superb volume" to which "few books of twentieth-century verse . . . compare . . . in greatness." This would be marvelous if true, and I can only ask the student of Hardy's verse to read through *Winter Words* and see if with the best of intentions and loving respect for the old poet he can find Bloom's statement to be more than hyperbolic and misleading

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(misreading, if he'd prefer). But, and again, no practical criticism of the poems is provided; rather Bloom has his eyes on the precursor Shelley, on "The Return of the Dead" [Apophrades], on "the chastened return of High Romantic Idealism." If you accept Bloom's systematic theorizing it *does* makes a difference after all, for whether or not it's true you will begin to see the last poems of Hardy to which it's applied become portentous, exemplary, and therefore great.

As for his taste with regard to contemporary writers, Bloom finds Robert Lowell "anything but a permanent poet . . . mostly a maker of period-pieces from his origins until now." John Ashbery, on the other hand, because he expresses the American Counter-Sublime and follows on from the deified Stevens is a "radiant" poet ("an inevitable comfort in our current darkness," says Bloom, darkly, elsewhere). "Radiance" is one of Bloom's favorite good words, and I am not able quite to fathom what richnesses it portends. A. R. Ammons is also extremely radiant, but Norman Mailer is extremely flawed, while Saul Bellow really isn't all that satisfactory, and Bloom prefers Pynchon to Mailer, but . . . At which point someone says, don't you see that he is a *romantic?* to which I answer, yes and I see also why he should have spent much energy in castigating T. S. Eliot and the "churchwardenly critics" (Bloom's phrase, proving he himself is no sissy) who were supposedly crippled by their priest. For Eliot pointed out in *The Sacred Wood,* apropos George Wyndham, that "Romanticism is a short cut to the strangeness without the reality" and that Wyndham employed it "to complete the varied features of the world he made for himself." So, Eliot concluded, the only cure for Romanticism was to analyze it. To be cured of his own Romanticism Bloom, and Hartman too, would need to draw upon modes of self-irony, possibilities for a comic perspective on things (and here they could take a lesson from their admired Kenneth Burke) which they are surely not about to. Let it simply be recorded then that when Bloom says about Blake's Tyger—"Hartman acutely points out that 'fearful symmetry' in *The Tyger* should be read as 'fearful ratio,' since *The Tyger's* speaker is the ephebe and the Tyger's maker the precursor. The Tyger, as Hartman suggests, is thus a Spectre or Covering Cherub, imposed by the late-comer imagination upon itself"—that there are, still are other people listening, reading, reading Yale professors in hopes of extending their literary-critical imaginations, but that they may not find it in them to stay much longer at this exclusive hermeneutical shindig.

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BRUCE ALLEN

Intrusions of Consciousness

"Whither is fled the visionary gleam?"
—Wordsworth

In a recent collection of her critical essays,[1] Joyce Carol Oates affirms the centrality and prominence of the individual's unconscious mind throughout modern literature—by assessing the work of ten inner-directed, highly *conscious* artists whom she values chiefly for their various demonstrations of "visionary" power. She sees no inconsistency in claiming that writers who turn their attention *inward* are unusually responsive to those wider traumas which the reasoning intellect suffers when it confronts the disruptive "realities" of twentieth-century life. Feeling the failures of social and political mechanisms, living amid evidence of scientific and philosophical relativism, the typical modern writer has become, necessarily, skeptical of any orderly context in which man's rationality functions meaningfully. The ultimate extension of such skepticism may be the denial of all efforts to resolve it, out of fretful apprehension that "Human consciousness. . . is always an intruder in the natural universe."

Not all of Oates's "visionaries" thus concede to the menaces of uncertainty. Their company includes the classic moderns Henry James and Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence, Beckett, and Kafka; two recent contemporaries—Norman Mailer and Flannery O'Connor—whose books seem certain to outlive their generation; and three rather surprising companions for them—poets Sylvia Plath and James Dickey, and the Midwest regionalist Harriette Arnow, whose single celebrated novel *The Dollmaker* (1954) strikes Oates as an instructive example of realism that reaches beyond its examination of social and economic truth, to disclose ". . . the inexplicable processes of life . . . against which the individual must assert himself in a continuous struggle."

Visionary ability in *The Dollmaker* is confined to its central (title) character, Gertie Nevels, a Kentucky farm woman uprooted from her home and "re-located" in industrialized, wartime Detroit. Her "art" permits her to envision the perfect carving (a face of Christ, only partly "visible" to her) which exterior circumstances will prevent her from completing. The same power that impels her to dream of ultimate things makes her perceive the ruin into which her husband and children are helplessly falling. Gertie's instinctual will to survive evidences a primitive "understanding," which flattens to despair when it *consciously* comprehends that the Nevels's rough-hewn fate is limited to "cyclical tragedy . . . constant struggle." This added dimension of unbalance—the disjunction between "unconscious"

[1] NEW HEAVEN, NEW EARTH: THE VISIONARY EXPERIENCE IN LITERATURE, by *Joyce Carol Oates*. Vanguard. $10.00.

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and "conscious" understanding of circumstance—multiplies the tensions already implicit in man's quizzical relationship with the universe beyond him. If the visionary sensibility perceiving such tensions is strong enough to withstand them, it can contrive aesthetic solutions to the disorder they threaten; if it is not, the writer's responses are reduced to the paradoxical "solutions" of withdrawal, irony, or the blunt admission of despair.

Few of the other writers gathered within Oates's design accept the inhibiting power of strictly *temporal* forces. But each conveys his sense of a fundamental uncertainty ruling human life; each confesses himself frustrated by some unfixable flux which disallows the establishing of anything permanent. (In Virginia Woolf's novels, people doubt whether they themselves exist independently, outside the networks of "relationships" they help to comprise. In Beckett's trilogy of novels, it is *relationships* and *externals* that are denied: all that can be known is "the soul in juxtaposition to nothing beyond itself.") Oates's way of linking them together seems to reason itself out this way: if one accepts as inevitable a *conflict* between the individual self and the universe (e.g., to D. H. Lawrence, the *sun* is "hostile" to the men on whom it looks down; it rejects their science's efforts to *control* it), it is possible to declare some victory by virtue of the very opposition—even if this is only the satisfaction of having perceived that things are not what they seem.

There are as many ways of combatting the universe's *perceived* "hostility" as there are individual angles of vision. Some appear intransigent pessimists (Kafka, Plath); some achieve consolatory artistic compromises (Mailer, Dickey); some find solutions thrust upon them by the rigidly structured creeds to which they adhere (Flannery O'Connor's unsparingly doctrinal Catholicism; James's unflagging worship of artistic process). The service that artists perform is the concretizing of their varying responses to the potential terror impermanence poses—in vivid identifying postures that display a gamut from, say, Beckett's metaphysical stonewalling, or Plath's clenched and bleeding "I"; through Dickey's burly embracing of "savagery," Kafka's urbane espousal of cathartic neurosis—as far toward the primal as Lawrence's belligerent (perhaps defensive?) "utilization and valuing of spontaneity." You can call it rich, vital proof of the imaginative variety of which art is capable; but surely some will dare call it incoherence.

This dense and complicated book's argument seems very loose. Certainly it was meant to be. The nine essays (Woolf and James are considered together, in the opening one) are variously gathered, were written and published over some dozen years, for different occasions (for example, Oates's essay on Harriette Arnow was a contribution to a volume of *Rediscoveries,* and then appeared as "Afterword" to a paperback reprint of *The Dollmaker).* Oates's definition of "visionary" is apparently as wide-open as is her book's organization. The word sometimes seems to denote a writer who sees through the veils of ambiguity which cloud most men's vision; sometimes, simply indicates a critic of oversimplifications, who employs satire or irony to insist that appearances are not realities. To

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me, it is never perfectly clear whether she uses "visionary" to mean, *literally,* a "mystic"—who penetrates to essences; or, whether her seers' special knowledge confines itself to realizing that the power of man's intellect is insufficient to explain and master the chaos of his experience. There *is* a difference; and I cannot see how this book's argument takes account of it.

Oates's subtitle phrase, "the visionary experience in literature," explains away what can be called discrepancies among the objects of her analyses. There's a very deliberate unifying device in her Preface, which identifies "the mystic in our time [as] . . . the analyst, the recorder, the intellectually curious observer of his own experience." This seems unarguably right for Plath, (by extension) Beckett, (by his own admissions and "advertisements") Mailer; surely it is the way to approach Kafka's depersonalized "fables." But: the conscious, rational mind that must learn its limitations is sometimes that of the created characters, as *distinguished* from their authors (Arnow's stolid, earthy farm-woman and dreamer; O'Connor's God-haunted country people; the self-assured sophisticates who adorn James's and Woolf's houses of fiction). The conclusion: if you are to accept Oates's insistence on the degree to which "visionary experience" dominates modern writing—well, you must concur with her that the characters whom visionary writers create are, invariably, extensions of their own psychological processes.

Still, I think most readers will agree that the imaginative leap she demands isn't at all an unreasonable one. I don't for a minute dispute Oates's individual readings of poets and novelists, or her assertion of a consensual intellectual framework within which all truly perceptive writers function. The problem is that one can't really accept *New Heaven, New Earth* as an unified book on its announced single theme. It is, palpably, a gathering of its author's assorted critical essays, all pointing in the general direction which her work as a whole has taken, and also extrapolating from past insights, a developing set of convictions that has become dominant in her recent fiction (there are frequent contrasts between the fact-riddled practicality of Western cultures, and the wise complacent mysticism of the East; her concluding essay, "Kafka's Paradise," stresses that writer's connections with Oriental fabulists, and likens his terse story-fragments to Zen *koans*).

Having stated these objections, let me say that I don't consider them very important. Rigid consistency is a hobgoblin of even large minds—and it is fascinating to watch Oates mix up acute critical analyses with heady speculation and challenging (often crucially revealing) digressions.

She is interested in the kinds of pressures which cause writers of wildly varying temperaments and backgrounds to conclude that the baffling discontinuity of man's experience requires a recorder of it to de-emphasize or denigrate "reality." To Henry James, the decisive confusions that threatened the sensitive thinking man's life were personal relationships—which could be sorted out and comprehended only by an intellect that would dedicate itself to "deciphering" such relationships, and thus discov-

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ering (by removing its extraneous surroundings) the integral individual trapped within them. In Kafka's world, the individual's fear of entrapping externality is pure paranoia: Oates argues that the *failures* of Kafka's "heroes" exist solely in their own minds, are "self-inflicted." When men like Gregor Samsa yield to the visionary temptation, they become obsessed by their perception of "a dominion of absolutely impersonal and incomprehensible Being over the efforts of individuals to influence it." Does this mean that they *wilfully* transform themselves into cockroaches? (having sensed that such is the nature of their lives, and that the metaphor might just as well coincide with the reality?)

Several of Oates's essays analyze the rhetorical and verbal strategies which accompany a "visionary's" rejection of what passes for reality. In the poems of James Dickey, constant, agitated motion is employed to express the writer's disappointed perception of a "divided" world, which "cannot accommodate man's most basic instincts." Dickey's violent free-form verse (as well as his novel *Deliverance)* beats out a deeply personal "preoccupation . . . with physical risk, a courting of the primitive in art and in life, . . . and a frantic, even masochistic need to continually test and 'prove' himself."

Norman Mailer is a subtler subject, and Oates's writerly empathy with his defiant articulations of individual consciousness vs. blurry officialdom is a bit unstable (quite forgivably, she infers a link between Mailer's avuncular celebrations of uncorrupted adolescence and his more strident counter-attacks against the feminists). Mailer *understands* technology—and this is what makes his horror at its "Faustian pull" so convincing. His book on the Apollo mission, *Of a Fire on the Moon,* offers uniquely vivid, pungent testimony on the artist's helpless failure to render "the accelerated pace of the world." If what I have elsewhere read is indicative, Oates is virtually alone among her peers in sensing that this is a key book in Mailer's developing *opus.* But her most generous remarks are reserved for his under-appreciated novel *Why Are We in Vietnam?* (1967)—a funny, feisty, wonderfully obscene "language-structure"; the most exhilarating expression thus far of Mailer's conviction that, if man is to stay aware and remain an individual, "he must attempt the creation of his own special language."

But the real significance of Oates's appreciative view of Mailer's work is that it departs—radically—from what *seems* a fixed preference for the "natural" powers of the unconscious mind over the surgical, antagonistic probing inward associated with conscious rationality. What she is urging, is a *synthesis* of such contraries—and the visionary writers who receive her deepest respect are those who accept the obligation to articulate a coherent, complete explanation of man's experience; a world-view that can stand unequivocally on the terms within which it is conceived. (No such *summa* has yet been forthcoming from Mailer: but I suspect that Oates values him precisely because she *knows* it is in him, and is still fermenting.)

Such a vision is contained in the grim dichotomies that rule Flannery O'Connor's Catholic universe. In *her* visionary search, for ". . . the revela-

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tion of a transcendental world of absolute value beyond the cheap, flashy wasteland of modern America. . . ," O'Connor flawlessly distinguishes the fates reserved for rational and non-rational souls. When her people try to assert their intelligence, O'Connor makes it apparent that they are thirsting after "forbidden knowledge," and will be struck down for their blasphemy. When they eschew rationality, and abide in unquestioning faith, they invariably learn that one must first lose his life, in order to find it. Oates sensibly criticizes the diagrammatic structures of O'Connor's novels and stories (showing how they make her characters uninteresting *except* as spiritual pawns). But she marvels at the work, because it is so firmly all of a piece: self-abasement and ritual; then the witnessing of miracle; the "Revelation" (especially that one that crowns O'Connor's most powerful story) which rescues the sufferer from the violent City of Man, and transports him to the City of God. Flannery O'Connor was a limited writer; but within those limits she achieved a clear-eyed, unrelenting magnificence which few modern writers have equalled.

Oates's receptive fascination with writers so unlike herself is probably the best proof of her galumphing book's ungainly charm and power. Her high estimate of Flannery O'Connor is especially revealing—because O'Connor's doctrinalism is so uncompromising; because its restrictive focus on religious truths would seem to deny it the *breadth* of experience the visionary needs if he is to encompass all experience. Oates sees that O'Connor is a genuine visionary, despite (because of) her "narrowness."

Even more instructive—because it stretches further, to comprehend its subject—is Oates's essay on Lawrence, "The Hostile Sun." By focussing attention on the nature poems, she discovers a Lawrence rather more complex than the anti-rationalist who vilified Freud, and preached obeisance to "dark gods" and primal forces. Those starkly psychological, concentrated *stares* at "he-goats" or "Bavarian Gentians" are designed to evoke that "ferocious externality, . . . uncontrollable, savage Otherness of nature. . . " which rejects and ridicules the idea that man is the measure of all things.

The really important thing about Lawrence—and I don't know if it has been elsewhere expressed so vigorously—is that "man" is not really his subject: the Lawrencian universe includes multitudes of consciousnesses to be met and observed; and man's sense of his own importance in the world must modify itself, and accord respect to "the unknowable mysteries of other forms of life." When you look—long enough and hard enough—at "birds, beasts and flowers," Lawrence might say, it is possible to imagine that they are looking back at you, possible, even, to guess what they are thinking.

It's that precise kind of imaginative participation in the work of other writers that enables Joyce Carol Oates to speak as if from *inside* the minds of her ten "visionaries." That is why this is a good, generous book (despite its cumbersome "organization")—by a writer who knows enough to be interested in everything that other writers do. It is one of the things that make her a real writer.

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ROGER SALE

The Realms of Gold

THE EPIGRAPH TO Mario Vargas Llosa's *Conversation in The Cathedral* is this, by Balzac: "Il faut avoir fouillé toute la vie sociale être un vrai romancier, vu que le roman est l'histoire privée des nations." It seems almost an ancient claim, a beacon at best for novelists from Peru, like Vargas Llosa—all the social life of people, the private history of whole nations as the stuff of fiction. Yet in the last six months a number of English and American novels have appeared, each of which claims, for itself and for the novel as a way of thinking about life, nothing less than the amplitude and centrality of major novels a century ago. Despite some serious flaws a number of these earn their pretensions, and one, I want to say, is a masterpiece, a book for a decade or a generation or forever. Given this, I must concentrate on these large books, and scant some otherwise noteworthy and decent ones that are in the sad position of being overwhelmed by this recovery for the novel of its realms of gold.[1]

For instance, this past summer has seen a serious novel, Judith Rossner's *Looking for Mr. Goodbar,* atop the *New York Times* best seller list. In another season that alone would be cause for surprise and even rejoicing, but here there is barely room for saying that it is indeed not a negligible book. To be sure, it is a rather sensational rendering of the murder of a New York schoolteacher by a southern drifter she has picked up in a bar, the sort of material Joyce Carol Oates likes to work with. To be sure, too, it offers the sixties as an historical period from which we have all escaped sufficiently safely that we can be thrilled by it—no doubt that decade will continue for some time to furnish gaudiness and excitement for other urban American Gothic novels. But Rossner is good the way Oates can be, and is more efficient too, so that without resorting to a pressurized cabin atmosphere she can locate the tangles of her heroine's Bronx family and the gradual wastedness of her obvious intelligence. The seduction by a college professor goes through the ritual motions of that embrace much better than most because Rossner knows just how much of what is happening to her the heroine can take in, how her intelligence cannot keep her from being and acting dumb. The rest, from the experiments with pot in the Kennedy years to the stirrings of the women's movement at the end of the decade, is more touristically handled, but one can complain here only

[1] LOOKING FOR MR. GOODBAR, by *Judith Rossner*. Simon & Schuster. $7.95. RAGTIME, by *E. L. Doctorow*. Random House. $8.95. ALMOST A LIFE, by *B. H. Friedman*. Richard Seaver/Viking. $8.95. BEFORE MY TIME, by *Maureen Howard*. Little, Brown. $8.95. CONVERSATION IN THE CATHEDRAL, by *Mario Vargas Llosa*. Harper & Row. $12.50. FAR TORTUGA, by *Peter Matthiessen*. Random House. $10.95. MEMOIRS OF A SURVIVOR, by *Doris Lessing*. Knopf. $6.95. HUMBOLDT'S GIFT, by *Saul Bellow*. Viking. $10.00. THE REALMS OF GOLD, by *Margaret Drabble*. Knopf. $8.95.

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that Rossner hasn't tried to do very much. The doing itself is really pretty good.

But for sheer expert doing nothing else this season comes close to *Mr. Goodbar*'s companion on the best seller list, E. L. Doctorow's deservedly popular success, *Ragtime*. As must be known to most by now, the secret of this book is its amazing air of authenticity. Doctorow will start a sequence about Houdini at the Tombs in New York like this:

> He accepted the challenge. He would escape from the irons at the following night's performance at the Keith Hippodrome. With the press crowded around, Houdini now proposed his own challenge: that then and there he be stripped and locked in a cell and his clothing placed outside the cell; if everyone would then leave he would contrive to escape from the cell and appear fully dressed in the Warden's office within five minutes.

This could be a biography of Houdini, a history of New York jails; it is hard to believe it didn't all happen as Doctorow says. Then, a page or so later, as Houdini is escaping, he sees a prisoner whose cell is laid with linen and service, a Regency armoire on the wall:

> Quickly Houdini began to dress. He put on his briefs, his trousers, his socks and garters and shoes. Across the well the prisoner began to undress. Houdini put on his undershirt, his shirt, his collar. He tied his tie and set the stock pin. He snapped his suspenders in place and pulled on his jacket. The prisoner was now as naked as Houdini had been. The prisoner came up to the front of his cell and raising his arms in a shockingly obscene manner he thrust his hips forward and flapped his penis between the bars. Houdini rushed down the promenade, fumblingly unlocked the cellblock door and closed it behind him.

The deadpan never changes. Does the reader, no longer reading anything like the standard biography of Houdini? In the next paragraph Houdini realizes the prisoner "had to have been" Harry K. Thaw, murderer of Sanford White, and Houdini goes into paroxysms of anguish at this reminder that the upper classes always mock him. Maybe, but with Harry K. Thaw's penis?

For at least half its length *Ragtime* is for me irresistible, a delightful discovery of a very simple literary method and a delighted exploration of some wonderful material on which to work it: Evelyn Nesbit, Emma Goldman, a New Rochelle family, a lower east side Jewish artist and his daughter, a superb black named Coalhouse Walker Jr., and the meetings of all these people with each other. Scholars will soon be at work showing how Doctorow's method is like Scott Joplin's, but a reader knows from the beginning that the resemblance is there, and intended, and effective. One never knows or needs to know where "history" leaves off and "Doctorow" begins; history, ransacked, is all style. Some readers find it all magnifi-

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cent, others tire of it pretty quickly—so be. This much can be said. Doctorow's previous success, *The Book of Daniel,* which employs the *Ragtime* method in places, is a more passionate and engaged novel, more a novel reader's novel. Which is not to say that *Ragtime* is mere popular fiction, but rather that its very assurance and completeness is its own obvious limitation. Furthermore, in the second half of the book the plot tends to dominate, and this forces characters into consecutive and therefore predictable actions, thereby lessening the ragtime method's charm. Admirers will not be disturbed by this, and Robert Altman will delight in filming Coalhouse Walker negotiating with Booker T. Washington for the return of the Morgan Library to its rightful owner, but the writing here is much more obvious than earlier. Still, for the most part *Ragtime* is what another great cook, Irma Rombauer, calls a delectable concoction.

B. H. Friedman's *Almost a Life* suffers because what Friedman is trying to do is either very easy or else beyond his powers. During the Fitzgerald revival a great many novels were written on the Gatsby model of "great man" hero and admiring but limited narrator, books like Wright Morris's *The Huge Season* and Frederic Buechner's *Return of Ansel Gibbs:* cool, literary, not very satisfactory. Since Morris and Buechner are writers of stature they went on, long after the fifties were over, to adopt different tones and stances to see what could be done with the Hero and the Witness. *Almost a Life* seems almost a reversion, cool as a cucumber, alert and knowing, about a famous photographer, a giant of a man who drinks and talks extravagantly, as seen by a button-down-collar-type from a magazine that might as well be *The New Yorker.* Friedman knows full well what is wrong with his narrator, but can do nothing to make him interesting; Jeff McMaster, the photographer, says interesting things about taking pictures, and some minor characters are well done, but all this is to be expected in this kind of book written by this good an author. *Almost a Life* is only almost a book because it contents itself with being like lots of others.

Maureen Howard's *Before My Time* is not as good as it should be, and not as good as admirers of *Bridgeport Bus* had reason to hope, but it is in many places a very impressive work nonetheless. Open it to any page concerning the Cogan family and the writing is warm, firm, and relaxed:

> One Saturday Fred Monahan, whose pencil holder she placed beside her bed each night, called up and asked for her, asked if she would like to come and play baseball over in his street. Siobhan who would normally have jumped at the chance said no she couldn't, that she and her brother had to go out. Monahan said, "See you in church." She was awkward, put the receiver down abruptly, yet she would have liked to have talked on to him. All week she'd noticed Fred Monahan's flesh. He had lots of moles on his arms, which she liked, but none on his face. . . . When she turned round from Fred Monahan's telephone call she said to her mother and Cormac, "It was nothing," and, head in a whirl, went straight to the pantry for a handful of Hydrox cookies though it was only nine in the morning.

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Siobhan and Cormac are twins in early adolescence—"they knew instinctively that their full given names were more of their mother's foolishness"—and Siobhan feels strongly that Cormac is moving away from their lifelong togetherness and wants not to leave him even to play ball. But she too is splitting off—thus the pencil holder, the staring at Fred Monahan's moles—and because she is, the handful of Hydrox cookies at 9 A.M. Howard can put pressure on each detail so a character is seen and a future action promised. When their mother tries to separate them by shipping them off to different camps, the twins run away; because they are themselves separating, they soon return, to Siobhan's disgust.

When Howard is dealing with the Cogans of Bruckner Boulevard—mother Millie in a flashback as a stenographer, daughter, and lover, "failed" father Jack in a marvelous friendship with a retired Jewish millionaire, Siobhan and Cormac trying to settle in to an unoccupied high-rise apartment—she is at her best, and that best is very good. But the major focus of the book is really on Millie's Boston cousin, Laura Quinn, discovering she is still before her time. Howard locates Laura's resentful but loving unfulfillment very well early on, but then sputters because the feeling itself does, and when Howard's pressure leads not to action but to repetition, the writing becomes less free, more insistent. One is tempted to say, simply, that Howard knows New York better than Boston, Catholics better than Protestants—and while that may be too simple, with her style she needs all the knowledge she can get to keep the action evolving out of the details. With Laura Quinn she either has the wrong kind of character for herself, or she doesn't know enough about her, and so, despite many brilliant passages, *Before My Time* disappoints as much as it satisfies. I hope she can go on to write *My Time;* it is the book no American woman has yet written, so far as I know, and no one is better equipped to write it than Maureen Howard.

Now we come to the mastodons, the books that are not content to locate a piece of life but which try to make that life into something like the private history of nations. Vargas Llosa's *Conversation in The Cathedral* is huge, almost a quarter of a million words, and manages that bulk with often amazing skill. On the one hand it is a panoramic novel, about dictatorship, squalor, and despair—"And in this country a person who doesn't fuck himself up fucks other people up"—that shows how limited and paralyzing decent responses must be under conditions of oppression and decay. On the other hand it is terribly elaborate technically, a dense interweaving of conversations, juxtaposed without explanation or warning, framed by a conversation in a bar called The Cathedral between the son and the former chauffeur of a wealthy businessman. Vargas Llosa has an excellent instinct for how much time and place shifting and cutting we can take, so that just when one thinks he is getting too close to imitating Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch* and is playing games for their own sake, he relaxes back into simpler panoramic realistic story-telling. When the technique is working well, which must be at least half the time, he traps the present and the past with each other very nicely, erodes hopes into despair without a touch of self-pity or authorial self-regard.

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What limits *Conversation in The Cathedral* is that it probably would be a better movie than it is a novel. The private history of Peru is seen externally, as though feelings and actions were always coherent. The cuttings in time and space are essentially a cinematic technique, so what is lost in prolonged consideration of character seeks to be balanced by suggestive metaphoric effects in juxtapositions. For a six hundred page novel this suggestiveness, this externality, comes to seem a little pat, but for a two-hour movie it could be very exciting. *Conversation in The Cathedral* is immensely knowing, and so it makes a reader feel knowing; it is an excellent rather than a moving novel, not great, but very good.

Vargas Llosa's knowledge is his by birthright, which is usually the best kind of novelistic knowing, but for almost twenty years now Peter Matthiessen has resolutely tried to do something else. He is a naturalist and an explorer, and thus a world traveler, a writer who seeks brooding absorption in landscapes not native to him. *Race Rock* is about the New England coast, *Sal Si Puedes* about California Chicano farmers, *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* about the South American jungle—to mention only those I've read—and each is a book I wanted to like more than I actually did. Matthiessen never quite gets beyond a sense that he is forcing his material, willing it into a respectful special shape. This is true of *Far Tortuga* too, though it is a singular and fascinating book, an adventure tale of nine men, mostly Cayman Islanders, embarked on a fatal turtle-fishing voyage off the Nicaragua coast. The book is mostly the conversation of these men, and it does take some getting used to:

> Call dat a bait?
> When I ain't got nothin better. (*sighs*) Copm Steadman dere on the *Majestic* used to say dat in de spring dey eat bird meat half de time, dey was so many of dem periodical birds coming aboard—snipes and all like that. Now de people killin *everything,* and dey ain't nothin in de month of April but a few of dem little swallers.

Many will not be able to imagine reading a long novel written in language so far removed from the native speech of writer or reader, and in this case the strain is very great because the language is that of non-white semi-literate fishermen, and the suspicion is unavoidable that Matthiessen is patronizing or sentimentalizing his characters.

Not so. Whatever else is wrong with *Far Tortuga* Matthiessen makes acclimatization to the western Caribbean easy, because he respects his characters for just the right reason—they are his, and he is absorbed in their lives. The voyage is doomed not for any metaphysical reason but because this is a private history of Cayman Island: the boat has left too late in the season and is ill-equipped and under-financed, and in what the characters equably lament as "modern time" people *are* killing everything and birds are hard to catch, turtles are less plentiful, and most of the crew suspect they could be making better money running refugees to the U.S. The captain, Raib Avers, is no Ahab, but in his way he is trying to do

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something just as impossible. He grew up when boats were all sails, he learned his boating and fishing skills, he loved the old captains. But his present boat hasn't a decent galley and the men complain of diesel oil in the food, hasn't a proper engineer and precious days are lost early in the voyage. The crew is a scruffy lot, and nostalgic idealist that he is, Copm Raib can't get their best work out of them because he is always complaining. The men work hard, and with courage, but the jobs don't get done. They admire the captain for his skills and his desire to make them fine seamen and fishermen, yet resent his follies because they know they cannot change their world, or their selves. One could quote passage after passage where the voices blend momentarily into a chorus of lament, then separate into individual voices, of determination, brief humor, indifference, and despair.

All this is admirable, sufficiently so that one can forget for pages at a time that this is only something Peter Matthiessen is bringing off. But, perhaps as the result of sensing his success with these people and their world, Matthiessen has tried to inflate his adventure story into a long novel. *Far Tortuga* is as long as *The Iliad,* and Matthiessen knows his world much less well than Homer knew his. The first and last hundred pages are marvelous, and there the story is firm and so the characters speak out of situations as well as out of selves. In between there is just much too much. Page-by-page Matthiessen's integrity and love bring it all off, but it is a *tour de force,* after all, and so many will not finish *Far Tortuga* because they will be worn down by its excessive length. A pity, for it is a fine book, a one-of-a-kind book, but if it becomes only a coterie enjoyment and enthusiasm, it will not be entirely the fault of its readers.

Doris Lessing's position is very different; in her recent work she seems to have been *trying* to turn her large audience into a coterie, with her insistence on madness-as-cure and her increasing devotion to the end of the world. So the first thing to be said about *Memoirs of a Survivor* is that it is real recovery, her best novel since *The Four-Gated City*. It is, like *Far Tortuga,* a willed book, but Lessing is once again in touch with what has made her a great writer; if she gains no new readers with it, she can draw many old ones back into the fold. Yes, it is about the end of the world, and on that score she has little new to add: a single woman is living alone in a nameless London as order slowly crumbles and groups of people, mostly young, are forming in the streets to create their own little societies and to begin the long trek out of the city. This is by now paradigmatic Lessing, as are the journeys the woman take in her mind to a place on the other side of the wall.

Nor will the great strength of this book—the relation between the woman and a girl of about twelve named Emily who appears in her apartment—seem altogether new. What marks the difference is that, stripped of most other needs and relationships, these two give us some of Lessing's best wisdom about mothers and daughters, older people and younger people. On the other side of the wall the older woman sees her own past, and in naming the girl she sees there Emily she establishes the

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essential continuity between the two. The woman sees some of the familiar figures of Lessing's autobiographical works—the talky insistent mother, the loving irritable father, the self-hating child—and brings that back to bear on the evolving relation with young Emily on this side of the wall.

Thus against a background which says something new is happening to the world is played the drama of ancient and unchanging human relations. Emily sits around the house for months, and then, during a cold spell, suddenly starts making clothes. The older woman feels gratified to see Emily steal some of her clothes—"and what a release it is, a shock—cold water on shrinking flesh, if you like—but a liberation," Emily free to begin to become herself, the older woman free of holding on to her own past and of having to protect Emily:

> Chrysalis after chrysalis was outgrown, and then, because of her shame at having wasted so much [of the older woman's clothes], she asked abruptly and gracelessly but in her over-polite and *awful* way for some more money, and went off by herself to the markets. She came back with some secondhand clothes that in one giant's step took her from being a child with fantastic visions of herself into a girl—a woman, rather. She was thirteen then, not yet fourteen; but she might as well have been seventeen or eighteen, and it happened in an explosion of days.

What the explosion brings, of course, is Gerald, the leader of the tribe forming on the street, and though "these young people's lives were communal, and mating was far from being the focus or pivot of a relationship," Emily "wanted, I knew, to be alone with Gerald: she would have liked that experience, the old one."

This leads into a vision on the other side of the wall, not of the woman's own explosion into adolescence, but of herself trapped in some love game with her father: "her body was contorting and twisting to escape the man's great hands that squeezed and dug into her ribs, to escape the great cruel face that bent so close over her with its look of private satisfaction." So if at one pole there is brand new history, if in the middle there is the broad band of unchanging experience which means that women are constantly being locked into relations with dominating men, then at the other pole there is individual experience and a great difference between Emily seeking Gerald and the older woman locked in the cruel embrace of her father. While all this is placed before us rather insistently, it nonetheless honors a great deal of what we know about life: "There she was, enclosed in her age, but in a continuum with those scenes behind the wall, a hinterland which had formed her—yet she could not see them or know about them, and it would be no use my telling her."

Nothing, or not enough, of "la vie sociale" here, to be sure, because *Memoirs of a Survivor* is not so much a novel as a novelistic distillation of Doris Lessing's knowing and way of knowing: the older woman sees Emily clearly, sees her as herself, but wisely, as someone else, knowing she has

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only her own useless and limited maturity to guide her. The end of the world may be important, but at least equally important is this relation, this clarity and bed rock wisdom that says, cataclysm or no: "*You are this, and this and this—this is what you have to be, and not that.*" In that spirit of acknowledging we can only be ourselves, Lessing the novelist defeats the spirit of the simpler visionary she showed signs of becoming. The book is austere, willed, too spare, all wrong in a sense, but essentially true and right.

We are getting up rather high on Parnassus now, and come to Saul Bellow's *Humboldt's Gift,* an even stronger indication of recovery than the new Lessing. For those who, like me, found *Mr. Sammler's Planet* too neat and doctrinaire, this sprawling, untidy mess of a novel comes as a great relief. This is not the Bellow of *The Victim* or *Seize the Day* or *Sammler,* but of *Augie March* and *Herzog,* the writer who believes of himself: "I had been stamped and posted and they were waiting for me to be delivered at an important address." It isn't about Delmore Schwartz, either, because Bellow simply cannot sustain an interest in someone other than himself over the stretch of a long novel. That is the glory of *Humboldt's Gift* as well as its fatal weakness.

Bellow is Charles Citrine now, immersed in Chicago, in his late fifties, in many places sounding like Augie:

> Well, Naomi, my father became an American too and so did Julius. They stopped all that immigrant loving. Only I persisted, in my childish way. My emotional account was always overdrawn. I never have forgotten how my mother cried out when I fell down the stairs or how she pressed the lump on my head with the blade of a knife. And what a knife—it was her Russian silver with a handle like a billy club.

Or like Herzog:

> Suppose I were to exclaim about morality, about flesh and blood and justice and evil and what it felt like to be me, Charlie Citrine? Wasn't this a court of equity, a forum of conscience? And hadn't I tried in my own confused way to bring some good into the world? Yes, and having pursued a higher purpose although without even getting close, now that I was aging, weakening, disheartened, doubting my endurance and even my sanity, they wanted to harness me to an even heavier load for the last decade or so.

If this sounds too much like an echo chamber, you won't like *Humboldt's Gift;* the Chicago reality instructors are here, as they were in *Augie* and *Herzog,* and Renata Koffritz is just Thea and Madeline warmed over.

But even in the least interesting parts of the book the writing is often as good or better than it has ever been. The leading reality instructor, for instance, a smalltime hood named Rinaldo Cantabile, is a terrible bore, but even as Cantabile is taking Citrine through his paces there is some

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stunning writing about Chicago on a cold December day. Since so much of Bellow's greatness is created with twists and turns over long passages, there is too little space here for proper quoting. Let me just say that the nine pages that begin "The cab pulled up at the Bath twenty minutes early" on p. 74, and end with Cantabile staggering Citrine by asking who owns the ancient Russian bath are reason enough to show why Bellow is our greatest writer.

More important is the one fully serious section of the book, a hundred pages in which Bellow is not just trying to do what he has always been able to do. It begins with Citrine visiting an old love, Naomi Lutz, as he is wrapping up affairs before going to Italy with Renata for Christmas, and carries through a series of changes of plan that takes him to New York and Houston. Citrine is approaching a crisis. His ex-wife has attached his bank account against the possibility he won't return, and in his continued failures with women and his financial bind Citrine is driven to try to find terms other than the standard American ones to measure his dream of achievement. In a moving visit to Long Island, followed by an expensive lunch at the Oak Room, Citrine sees anew how much his love of clothes, and shoes, and the skin of women, must cost him, and in his visit in Houston to see his totally American brother who is "disfiguring south Texas with shopping centers and condominiums," he is driven to try to understand and justify his possibilities:

> I knew how Ulick's balance sheets would look. They'd read like Chapman's *Homer,* illuminated pages, realms of gold. If zoning ordinances interfered with this opportunity he was prepared to lay out a million bucks in bribes. I saw that in his face. He was the positive, I the negative sinner. He might have been wearing imperial sultry colors. I might have been buttoned into a suit of Dr. Denton's Sleepers. Of course I had a big thing to wake up to, a very big challenge. Now I was only simmering, still, and it would be necessary to come to a full boil. I had business on behalf of the entire human race—a responsibility not only to fulfill my own destiny but to carry on for certain failed friends like Von Humboldt Fleisher who had never been able to struggle through into higher wakefulness. My very fingertips rehearsed how they would work the keys of the trumpet, imagination's trumpet, when I got ready to blow it at last.

Citrine had "fallen into a deep snooze that lasted years and decades" while his brother transformed Chapman and Homer into balance sheets of millions of dollars. Now he reaches for a higher wakefulness.

Though Citrine never blows the trumpet, Bellow's instincts carry him rightly for a long way. In *Herzog* Bellow reached out to renew himself as a good Jew—"Evidently I continue to believe in God"—but the action of the book led him no closer to the concomitants of that belief, love and prayer. In the interim, his emotional account still overdrawn, Bellow seems to have realized that such loving and prayerfulness simply are not in him, which forced him to look elsewhere than in Judaism for his renewed

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existence. Kooky places too: Rudolph Steiner, anthroposophy, pamphlets by clairvoyants, a guru who reads aloud to the dead. Others have always nagged at Bellow for the derivativeness of his intellectual equipment, overlooking the obvious fact that no one states an idea better than he, and misreading his terrible need to make his ideas something other than distractions from the self. He fawns over the reality instructors because they know what they want, and make their desires, their selves, and their world coherent. Augie and Herzog and Citrine have never been able to do that; they admire America, chase women, love fancy clothes, and want desperately to transcend all that. Augie settles for loving, Herzog for faith, but those no longer suit: the desiring self must now be transcended, and Citrine reads a pamphlet which tells him: "This external world we no longer see, for we are *it*. The outer world is now the inner. Clairvoyant, you are in the space you formerly beheld," and so you can look back and see yourself.

But Bellow does not know what that means except as words. If Citrine could blow the trumpet he would be able to live a life in the echo of its sound, but he can't, Bellow can't, and so the last hundred pages of *Humboldt's Gift* are a mess. Citrine has nothing to say or do and Bellow cannot be interested any longer, as he was in *Herzog,* in trying to make that silence and stillness interesting or enough. The return of Cantabile near the end to bail Citrine out of the worst of his money woes is really the white flag of surrender. But if this novel dosen't work at the end, and if too much of what comes before is replay, it fails at a level no other American writer tries to reach, commits itself to failure by seeking all that Balzac or Dickens ever sought. Self-loving Bellow may be to excess, but self-protective he is not. I love him for the many brilliant things in this book, almost as much for taking such a high road to ruin.

With Margaret Drabble's *The Realms of Gold* we come to full realization that her title is the true name for fiction. In reviewing her last three books in these pages I have had occasion to remark on some flaws that began to seem so persistent that it felt foolish to keep pointing them out when obviously she could do so much in their despite: a weakness of plot, a heavy reliance on not very interesting male characters, an excessive willingness to settle for superb parts and inferior wholes. But here all that has been wiped away. This long novel is wonderfully and carefully worked out, rich in pretension, detail, and execution so that one really needs to read right through to the end to see all she has conceived. There are at least two places where the book seems to lose its way, to become attenuated, but finally one sees it is all needed, not just to make the theme full but to make the story clear.

Frances Wingate, neé Ollerenshaw, is a successful archaeologist of thirty-seven, mother of three children, world traveler, sometime mate of Karel Schmidt. The novel opens as Frances is suffering from a brief bad spell of misery and tears the night before she is to lecture in a nameless Mediterranean city. One definition of her momentary misery is the Midlands sickness: "there must be something positively *poisoning* the whole of

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South Yorkshire and the Midlands," she says later, "or they wouldn't all be so bloody miserable up there, and live in such *appalling* conditions." Since Frances is seldom in the Midlands, she suffers from this poisoning only occasionally, but "even in the middle of the Sahara, it flattens me out if I'm not careful." We know right away that Frances goes to the Sahara because she discovered there the remains of an ancient outpost where Carthaginians met traders coming from central Africa; it was this discovery that made her famous. We don't know much about her misery yet, though it seems clearly connected to her impulsive decision to tell Karel they must break off even though she loves him; we had always thought people in the Midlands suffered for reasons well beyond their control.

When Frances returns to England she visits the home of her Ollerenshaw grandparents in Tockley, a flat Midlands village built on recovered North Sea marshland. The grandparents are dead, but Frances had loved visiting when young; she now sees that the rural cottage is lived in by a rum couple, and that most of the six miles between the cottage and the village is built up with EASTERN INDUSTRY, INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, PRIESTMAN PLANT. Yet what was there, really, before this vulgarity came on the scene?:

> The pursuit of archaeology, she said to herself, like the pursuit of history, is for such as myself and Karel a fruitless attempt to prove the possibility of the future through the past. We seek a utopia in the past, a possible if not an ideal society. We seek golden worlds from which we are banished, they recede infinitely, for there never was a golden world, there was never anything but toil and subsistence, cruelty and dullness . . . . Child sacrifice we label benevolent birth control, a dull and endless struggle against nature we label communion with the earth. We see an eskimo child drag a dead sea gull along a bleak beach by a piece of seal gut, and we praise its diverse customary joys. . . . What for, what for, said Frances to herself. What is it for, the past, one's own or the world's. To what end question it so closely. Generations of her ancestors had gathered stones in those fields. Her grandfather had grown tomatoes and potatoes. Her father had studied newts and become a professor of zoology. And for herself, as a result of their labors, the world lay open. That was why she sat so comfortably with a tumbler of brandy at her elbow, a portable typewriter in front of her, a choice of two single beds . . . . Her spirits soared with the steam. The choice of two beds, both with clean sheets, was after all something.

Why question the past when one can choose to love the presence of clean sheets in a provincial hotel, to feel the present world all laid out before oneself?

One reason offered immediately is the story of Janet Bird, a distant cousin of Frances', who lives in one of those tacky new building-society estates with her tacky husband, and who hates her life with a dull misery at least as great as those who plowed fields in earlier generations. For fifty pages we are trapped in her late afternoon preparing for guests, her

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wondering if she will ever knife her husband, her numb silence during dinner and the evening, her stratagems for staying up too late for her husband to claim his nightly piece of her flesh. Drabble here is in the familiar territory of anguished short stories, and we can only wonder, though we see how very well she is handling all this, why we are reading about Janet at all. Then Drabble steps in, Trollope-like, to say: "And that is enough, for the moment, of Janet Bird. More than enough, you might reasonably think, for her life is slow, even slower than its description, and her dinner party seemed to go on too long to her, as it did to you." Arch writing that? Maybe, but it is not casual.

For we are off again, this time to David Ollerenshaw, another cousin, a lonely geologist who broods on a time even older than Frances' Carthaginian traders:

> It amazed him, the way in which people these days seemed to admire the primitive. If they admired it so much, why didn't they go off like himself and try it? There were still plenty of extraordinarily uncomfortable places left in the world, and he had been to many of them.

He is standing by what he thinks of as a second-rate volcano in the Sahara, on his way to a conference in Adra, going there, as only a pleasantly crazy geologist would go, by car. His idea of heaven, he thinks, would be to "watch mountains heave and fold, seas shrink, rivers wear down their valleys, continents drift and collide, forests dry into deserts and deserts burgeon into forests. . . . Man's life span was too short to be interesting: he wanted to see all the slow great events, right to the final cinder, the black hole."

It is, thus, a mural Drabble is building, with her three Ollerenshaws as her central motifs: what is the point of living now, she keeps asking, what are our possibilities as opposed to those of the past? Janet is locked into an awful present, David broods on a pre-human past, Frances exploits with careless and enticing pleasure possibilities enjoyed by no earlier age. Since Frances is the most interesting the large middle of the book is hers—her good way with her children, her inconclusive efforts to tell Karel by postcard and letter that she loves him, her touching visit to her alcoholic brother who has his own way of loving life, her trip to the same conference in Saharan Adra that cousin David gets to by car. Having established her triptych, having committed herself to telling us she is in control, Drabble lets all this spin out easily, giving it only the form life necessarily must have.

Frances' postcard finally gets to Karel, who immediately catches a plane to Adra in order to arrive there after Frances has left. Plot time. There's no way to convey how good Drabble is in through here. If the plot must somehow involve the meeting of all the people hitherto kept separate, it cannot do just that, because their separateness originally was a matter of their central differences one from another. Further, some relation between past and present must be established that will answer the questions Frances asked on her first visit to Tockley. And it all happens. An old aunt

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Ollerenshaw is found in Tockley, dead, her body allowed to rot, in her cottage; there is a brief national scandal, Frances must go to tidy up somehow, as Janet has already tried to do, being the last person to see the aunt alive. Thus brought back, to Tockley, to one's own and one's family's past, Drabble touches us down to the Ollerenshaws:

> They had been peasant people, *i d* of beetroot people, and only a few of them, like Ted's son and her cousin David, had struggled out by their wits and climbed perilously up from the flat land, up the bean-stalk of the grammar school, to the golden world above.

But the one thinking this is Janet Bird, for whom the trip up the beanstalk, out of the primitive past to the affluent present, has brought her out to a confining life; her dead aunt had lived far better, living out a life of determined wreckage with insistent beauty.

Drabble cannot change Janet's life, but she can make her meet Frances, and in their ghastly first efforts not to hate each other, in the subsequent dinner Frances drags Janet off to because Karel and David have just arrived from Adra, the book sings, golden, happy even:

> David was quite pleased with himself, too. He had organized Karel, a hopeless traveler, with exemplary efficiency: he had tracked Frances down like a detective, and here, as a reward for his efforts, was his own little cousin Jan, looking quite pink and cheerful, and giggling rather a lot with excitement and gin and tonic. It was all very satisfactory.

The subsequent meal is terribly expensive, Frances flashes credit cards, Karel can barely eat but he does hit a slot machine jackpot later, and Janet loves it because the food is good and her husband hates the restaurant. The present lives off the past as it buries it:

> The air outside, as they stood and waited for the cab to arrive to pick them up again, was cool and dank. A light rain was falling. They waited in the stable yard, where loose boxes now housed Jaguars and Mercedes, and smelled the cold smell of grass and stone, a vestigial scent of straw and apples, a smell of raw-turned earth. "England," said David, breathing it in. "How lovely to be in England. I don't know why one ever goes away."

There is more, but this is enough.

I have tried to do little more than lay out this novel in a celebrating way, because I believe it, every word. The joy at the end overwhelms disbelief. Drabble knows. Having suffered a life that led to years of novels of hiddeness and unfulfillment, having touched down with Arnold Bennett and perhaps thereby discovering she was suffering only from a curable if lingering case of Midlands illness, she can create that stable and those Jaguars, the smell of straw and apples, the private history of an England that, if only in this beautiful novel, is becoming a realm of gold.

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DONALD E. STANFORD

Georgia on My Mind

FOR THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS the Beehive Press of Savannah, Georgia, has been issuing a series of handsomely printed and beautifully designed books about Georgia. Of the twelve volumes that make up this Press's first offering,[1] by far the most interesting is the reissue of C. Vann Woodward's brilliant biography of *Tom Watson—Agrarian Rebel* which was first published in 1938. The Georgian Populist—his dates are 1856-1922—emerges in Woodward's portrayal as an unforgettably dynamic, paradoxical, appealing and yet (particularly towards the end of his career) despicable politician and bigot.

He was at his best in the 1890s when his Populist and agrarian program won him a seat in Congress for one term—a seat which would have been renewed twice had he not been cheated out of it by fraudulent elections—and the Populist vice-presidential nomination on the Bryan ticket in 1896. During these years Watson stressed the positive and constructive side of his movement which brought him not only partisan support in the south but considerable sympathy elsewhere, including the personal esteem of Theodore Roosevelt, and later on in the 1920s and 1930s much of his agrarian program found a new philosophical and literary expression in the "I'll Take My Stand" group of Ransom, Tate, and others. However, agrarian provincialism as a political force (as distinct from a philosophical stance) as well as populism died in 1896 with the defeat of Bryan on the Populist and Democratic ticket. In the 1890s Watson stood for, in Woodward's summary:

> . . . Agrarianism for the South; a glorification of the farmer and his way of life; war upon the industrial East and alliance with the agrarian West; open and relentless class conflict with the enemy classes both without and within the South; and the enlistment of the Negro in the battle for the farmer equipped with as many political weapons as Watson dared give him.

With the debacle of 1896 and the victory of McKinley, Watson retreated to

[1] TOM WATSON—AGRARIAN REBEL, by *C. Vann Woodward*. $12.00. HISTORY OF GEORGIA, by *William B. Stevens*. 2 vols. $30.00. THE RAMBLER IN GEORGIA, edited by *Mills Lane*. $16.00. THE MOST DELIGHTFUL COUNTRY OF THE UNIVERSE, edited by *Trevor Reese*. $16.00. THE CLAMOROUS MALCONTENTS, edited by *Trevor Reese*. $18.00. MY SOJOURN IN THE CREEK NATION, by *Louis Milfort*. $10.00. TRAVELS TO NORTH AND SOUTH CAROLINA, GEORGIA, EAST AND WEST FLORIDA, by *William Bartram*. $16.00. SLAVERY TIME WHEN I WAS CHILLUN DOWN ON MARSTER'S PLANTATION, edited by *Ronald Killion* and *Charles Waller*. $9.00. SLAVE LIFE IN GEORGIA, by *John Brown*. $10.00. RECONSTRUCTION IN GEORGIA, by *C. Mildred Thompson*. $15.00. THE NEW SOUTH, by *Henry Grady*. $8.00. SAVANNAH REVISITED: A PICTORIAL HISTORY, by *Mills Lane*. $15.00.

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his personal library of ten thousand volumes and began writing a series of books, the best of which is *The Story of France.*

But Watson, although a voracious reader, was not the kind of man who could stay in a library for long. He soon returned to his characteristic role as crusader of Lost Causes, his crusades becoming more and more paranoid as he advanced in years. His winning of zero electoral votes in the presidential campaign of 1904 seems to have increased his irrationality, and after 1910 he was probably a pathological case. He engaged in futile personal attacks on the sex life of Governor Hoke Smith. He began a crusade against Catholics in August, 1910, in one of his magazines with an article entitled "The Roman Catholic Hierarchy: The Deadliest Menace to our Liberties and Our Civilization"; he became an ardent champion of White Supremacy and Lynch laws. "In the South, we have to lynch him [the Negro] occasionally, and flog him, now and then, to keep him from blaspheming the Almighty, by his conduct on account of his smell and color. . . . *Lynch law is a good sign: it shows that a sense of justice yet lives among the people.*" [The italics are Watson's.] He became an outspoken anti-Semite, using the Frank case as his opportunity for denunciation of the Jew. Leo Frank (a Jew) was convicted on circumstantial evidence of murdering a factory girl named Mary Phagan and was sentenced to death. Outside the South (and indeed in Georgia as well) many people thought Frank innocent, the jury being biased against him by the diatribes of Watson and others. Watson called for a vigilante committee to act in case the sentence was commuted. Governor Slaton did in fact commute the sentence the day before his term expired. The ex-governor then left the state. An armed group of vigilantes broke into Frank's prison cell and lynched him. Fifteen thousand people viewed his body in the Atlanta morgue.

With the outbreak of World War I Watson took an extreme anti-Wilson, anti-war position. His publications were barred from the mails under the Espionage Act in 1917. With the closing down of his presses, Watson's career would seem to have ended, but he made a final successful political stand and was elected to the U. S. Senate in 1920 with the beginning of the Harding administration. During the two years that he served until his death in 1922, his speeches in the Senate were marked by the same kind of demogoguery that characterized his writings.

Woodward's fully informed, objective, and beautifully written account of this colorful albeit eventually corrupted crusader has become a classic of twentieth-century historical writing and the Beehive Press has done well in making it available again.

William Bacon Stevens, who is remembered today for his two volume *History of Georgia from the First Discovery by Europeans to the Adoption of the Present Constitution in MDCCXCVIII,* was born in 1815 in Bath, Maine, took his degree in medicine from Dartmouth College, settled in Savannah where he was first a physician and later a minister, went on to Athens to become rector of the Emmanual Church as well as Professor of Oratory and Belles Lettres at the University of Georgia, published the first volume

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of his history in 1847 and then removed to Philadelphia where he published his second volume in 1859. He died, a Bishop, in Philadelphia in 1887. A yankee by birth, a resident of the South for only eleven or twelve years, a physician and ecclesiastic by profession, and with historical research as a hobby only, he nevertheless produced the first competent, scholarly, and readable history of the State, a work that has not yet been superseded. This reprint, introduced by E. M. Coulter of the University of Georgia, is a valuable addition to the Beehive series.

Stevens wrote in a style that sometimes reminds one of a slightly diluted Prescott. He must certainly have read Prescott's *Ferdinand and Isabella* and his *Conquest of Mexico* before or during the writing of his own history. He shows a fondness for the earlier eighteenth-century balanced sentence and stereotyped epithet and he quotes frequently from Pope. Particularly fine is his account of the siege of Savannah in the fall of 1779 and the American failure to take the city in the most bloody battle of the Revolutionary War except for Bunker Hill. The death of the intrepid and picturesque Polish Count Pulaski in this engagement gave Stevens the opportunity to sketch the Count's entire career in some of the best written and most interesting pages of his history.

The thirteen Ramblers whose accounts of travels in Georgia from 1796 to 1854 have been brought together by Mills Lane range from the internationally famous geographer Charles Lyell and the landscape architect who planned Golden Gate Park, Frederick Law Olmsted, to the little known Scottish citizen Basil Hall who took a "hilarious tragicomic stage-ride across the Georgia wilderness in 1828." They all agree on one thing—the dangers and frustrations of travel in Georgia, anywhere in Georgia but particularly in the interior, during the first half of the nineteenth century. Most of the Ramblers were appalled by the degradation of the small farmers, a deterioration caused by whiskey, excessive tobacco chewing, poverty, and disease. In the Gold Region of Georgia one Rambler found the whites to be "tall, thin, cadaverous-looking animals, looking as melancholy and lazy as boiled cod-fish, and when they dragged themselves about formed a striking contrast to some of the swarthy, athletic-looking Cherokees." In the more populous districts, the savage brawling appalled many. Mills Lane in his Introduction states that in some parts of the state every third or fourth man had one eye, the other having been gouged out in a fight. "At Jacksonborough it was said that in the mornings after drunken frolics and fights, you could see the children picking up eyeballs in teasaucers." Such was the deterioration of the quality of life in much of the state founded a century previously by the honorable and philanthropic gentleman James Oglethorpe.

The decline of Georgia from the high hopes held for it at the time of its founding in 1732-33 is brilliantly illustrated by comparing *The Rambler in Georgia* with a selection of the promotional literature for the colony written from 1717 to 1734 and brought together and edited by Trevor Reese of the University of London under the title *The Most Delightful Country of the Universe*. Sir Robert Montgomery writing his tract in 1717 on his project for

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a colony south of Carolina in "The Most Delightful Country of the Universe" between the Savannah and the Altamaha rivers named his Utopia the Margravate of Azilia and presented an engraved plan as rigidly constructed as a chess board. In the healthy air and fertile soil, the settlers are assured, it will be easy to cultivate "every Growth which we possess in England."

Nothing came of this particular pipe dream, but the romantic promotional literature probably had some effect when actual colonization began a few years later. As time went on, more sober arguments for removal to Georgia were advanced. Sir Francis Bacon's "An Essay on Plantations" was reprinted in 1732 and his admonition was recalled: "Planting of Countries is like planting of Woods; for you must make account to lose almost twenty Years profit, and expect your Recompence in the End."

Within a decade after the founding of Georgia there was widespread dissatisfaction among the settlers. Trevor Reese has also brought together and introduced *The Clamorous Malcontents: Criticisms and Defenses of the Colony of Georgia, 1741-1743,* a series of tracts bitterly attacking and strongly defending the policies of Oglethorpe and the trustees in managing the new colony. The primary causes of dissatisfaction which were put forth by Patrick Tailfer and others in their *A True and Historical Narrative of the Colony of Georgia* and reaffirmed by Thomas Stephens in his *The Hard Case of the Distressed People of Georgia* were the exclusion of Negroes (either as slaves or as hired hands) from the colony, the prohibition of rum, improper tenure of land, dictatorial acts of Oglethorpe and his successor which infringed on civil liberties, distribution of worthless land to the less fortunate colonists, and false advertising of the climate and productivity of Georgian soil. As a result ". . . The poor Inhabitants of *Georgia* are scattered over the Face of the Earth; her Plantations a Wild, her Towns a Desart, her Villages in Rubbish, her Improvements a By-word, and her liberties a Jest; an Object of Pity to friends, and of Insult, Contempt, and Ridicule to Enemies."

These charges were cogently and decisively refuted by Benjamin Martyn in two pamphlets, *An Impartial Enquiry* and *An Account Shewing the Progress of the Colony*. Martyn pointed out that one of the main reasons for founding Georgia was to establish a buffer area between the Spaniards of Florida and the English of South Carolina. In such a frontier state a large black population was militarily inadvisable, hence the exclusion of Negroes. As for rum, it was an obvious evil that had caused more deaths than the climate which Tailfer had unjustly maligned, and as for the barrenness of the land—it was not barren to those who were willing to cultivate it. As for the original restriction on inheritance of land (at first to male heirs only) and infringements of civil liberties, these improprieties had long since been alleviated. Thomas Stephens, in his reply to Martyn's pamphlets, expressed his grievances so bitterly that he was haled before the House of Commons and forced to beg pardon and confess errors on his knees.

Louis Milfort's bragging and politically motivated *Memoirs* are today

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still worth reading because of the vividly written firsthand accounts of Indian institutions and ceremonies, their methods of preparing for and waging war, their various initiation rituals, and their marriage, funeral, and divorce customs. Milfort, a Frenchman, lived among the Creek Indians of Georgia from 1775 to 1795. He was an intimate friend of the famous Creek leader Alexander McGillivray (son of a Creek woman of French and Indian blood and of a Scotch father). He married McGillivray's sister and (according to his own account) he was chosen to be Great War Lord by the Indians.

After the death of McGillivray, Milfort returned to France where his dislike of Americans and his friendship with and authority over the Creeks led him to believe he might be considered useful by Napoleon. In 1802 when it was rumored that Napoleon was considering occupation of the Louisiana territory by a French army and perhaps even war against the Americans, Milfort hastily threw together his *Memoirs,* dedicated the book to Bonaparte, and endeavored to demonstrate that the presence of a French Army was necessary to curb the expansionist dreams of the rapacious Americans, or Anglo-Americans as he calls them. Without the presence of a European power in the Mississippi area, he argued, the Americans would in fifty years be masters of North and South America, the West Indies, and would dictate laws to Europe. Napoleon failed in Santo Domingo a few months after Milfort's book was published. The next year Bonaparte sold the Louisiana territory to the United States and Milfort's dreams of conquering America for Napoleon ended. The *Memoirs* are ably translated, edited, and introduced by Ben C. McCary.

William Bartram's account of his travels two hundred years ago through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida is here reprinted in facsimile from the London 1792 edition with its nine original plates and seventeen additional illustrations. Among the distinguished readers who have admired Bartram were John Livingston Lowes, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Carlyle, and Chateaubriand. Coleridge liked Bartram's account of crocodiles and alligators particularly and derived some of his imagery from them. Here is a passage which may have become Alph, the sacred river of *Kubla Khan,* in the subconscious mind of Coleridge:

> It is astonishing and incredible, perhaps, I may say, to relate what unspeakable numbers of fish repair to the fatal fountain or receptacle, during the latter summer season and autumn, when the powerful sun beams have evaporated the waters off the savanna; where those who are so fortunate as to effect a retreat into the conductor, and escape the devouring jaws of the fearful alligator and armed gar, descend into the earth, through the wells and cavities of vast perforations of the rocks, and from thence are conducted and carried away, by secret subterranean conduits and gloomy vaults, to other distant lakes and rivers.

Bartram's *Travels* have for today's reader an enormous appeal. It is impossible to read sentences like the following without wishing to turn back the

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calendar two centuries, to pitch camp with Bartram, to relive his experiences, mosquitoes and all:

> We pitched our tent under the shelter of a forest of Live Oaks, Palms, and Sweet Bays; and having in the course of the day procured plenty of Sea fowl, such as curlews, willets, snipes, sand birds, and others; we had them dressed for supper, and seasoned with excellent oysters, which lay in heaps in the water, close to our landing-place. The shrub Capsicum growing here in abundance, afforded us a very good pepper: we drank of a well of fresh water just at hand, amidst a grove of Myrtles. Our repose however was incomplete, from the stings of musquetoes, the roaring of crocodiles, and the continual noise and restlessness of the sea fowl, thousands of them having their roosting places very near us, particularly loons of various species, herons, pelicans, Spanish curlews, etc. all promiscuously lodging together, and in such incredible numbers, that the trees were entirely covered.

The job of the Bartrams, however, was not the mere passive enjoying of the superabundant life of unspoiled nature. It was, as Josephine Herbst put it in her *New Green World,* "To open up the radiant world, to capture the enormous designs that the American forests cast!" for William, like his botanist father John, was a scientist, and like a more famous scientist, Charles Darwin, the author of *The Voyage of the Beagle,* he had the seeing eye. Most of the *Travels* of this kind and gentle man are still as fresh and vivid to us as the day they were written. Unlike his sterner father, William got along well with the Indians and described their appearance and behavior carefully. It is pleasant to remember that the Florida tribes adopted him and named him The Flower-Gatherer.

Two books, *Slavery Time* and *Slave Life in Georgia,* demonstrate Eugene Genovese's paradox that although slavery may be correctly termed paternalistic, the paternalism had its violent as well as its benevolent side. As Genovese has said, "Paternalism is violence prone." Students of the "peculiar institution" who believe that slavery was less harsh than formerly supposed will find some evidence in the first of these books but they will get no comfort at all from the second. *Slavery Time* consists of a series of interviews made by WPA writers in the 1930s with former slaves of Georgia. All of those interviewed were of course very old. They look back at the days of their childhood through a haze of nostalgia as they are suffering in the thirties from the weaknesses of age and the poverty of the great depression. None of them had experienced slavery as an adult. It was better in the old days is the opinion of many. "You could hear Niggers a-singing in the fields 'cause they didn't have no worries like they got now." The editors, Ronald Killion and Charles Waller, point out in the Introduction that "slavery was a human situation with human reactions, not an arbitrary, inflexible system of law and economics. Theorizing seldom occurred to the field hands on a Georgia plantation." Particularly, they might have added, when the normal work day was from sun up to sun down. When we try to picture to ourselves the day-to-day existence to the normal slave, even under a "kind" master, a good deal of the recent

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elaborate theorizing about slavery, Marxist and otherwise, seems remote and academic.

John Brown's autobiographical narrative, *Slave Life in Georgia* (dictated, because he was illiterate), makes some of the more harrowing scenes in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* look like a quilting bee. He was born into slavery in Virginia in 1818, sold to a certain Thomas Stevens of Baldwin County, Georgia, who frequently flogged him and allowed a doctor friend to try heat exhaustion experiments on him, and eventually escaped and started *walking to England,* such was his confused notion of geography. He allowed himself to be resold to another master in a fraudulent deal, escaped again, walked 450 miles north along the Mississippi, found the first stage of the Quaker underground railway in Illinois and by this made his way to Michigan and Canada, where, after working in the mines he bought a ticket to England and eventually told his story to the secretary of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society who published it in 1855. F. N. Boney has edited the Beehive edition with numerous footnotes identifying persons and places mentioned by Brown, which are favorable evidence as to his veracity. He says, "John Brown's narrative not only survives historical scrutiny but actually broadens the historian's understanding of the complex, contradictory institution of slavery."

C. Mildred Thompson's *Reconstruction in Georgia,* a standard book on the subject since its publication in 1915, is the book of a conscientious, plodding historian intent on giving us the facts of the economic, political, and sociological situation in the scandal-ridden, carpetbagging years 1865–1872. Miss Thompson does not have the power of a Vann Woodward to recreate scenes, characters, and situations and consequently her volume, although a good source of information, is rather dull reading. Her attitude (with one exception) is that of the impartial, judicious observer. The exception reveals how our views of civil rights have changed in the last sixty years. Miss Thompson states that immediately after the Civil War, ". . . the reorganized legislature of Georgia put the freedmen [the former slaves] on the basis of practical civil equality with white citizens." And then she goes on to say, "The privilege of the ballot and liability to jury duty was not assigned to them." Thus, two basic rights of American constitutional democracy, the right to vote and the right to be tried by a jury of one's peers, were denied the blacks. And yet, says Miss Thompson, they had "practical civil equality" with the whites!

Thompson's thesis is that from 1865-1867 Georgia was gradually but successfully returning to stability both economically and socially, and then Washington's congressional Reconstruction act of 1867 disrupted this slow progress by giving the Negro the right to vote in an attempt to make him an important political factor, thus raising the dread spectre of black supremacy, a supremacy to be maintained by the Negro vote controlled by Republican carpetbaggers. As Miss Thompson put it, "By emancipation the negro became a social menace to the class of poor whites. By becoming a voter he was a source of danger to the whites of all classes." By 1872, Georgia had defeated congressional reconstruction. "The negro was made to feel that his sphere was the field, not politics, and that polling places were not healthy resorts for black men. . . . On the one side was law and

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on the other was the social custom of generations." Black power and Republican control of the state were broken, but the problem of racial antagonism, intensified "a hundredfold" by Republican reconstruction (according to Thompson), was bequeathed to later generations.

One views the career of Henry Grady (1850-1889) with mixed feelings today. The editor of the Atlanta *Constitution* was considered the most eloquent spokesman of the New South. He was forward-looking, optimistic, a booster. He was pro-Union: "I still thank God that the American conflict was adjudged by higher wisdom than his or mine, that the honest purposes of the South were crossed, her brave armies beaten, and the American Union saved from the storm of war. I love this Union . . ." He argued for complete reconciliation of North and South and he believed that the New South could become prosperous and peace loving with the development of industries, exploitation of its natural resources—particularly iron and timber—and a diversified agriculture not entirely dependent on King Cotton. He claimed to have a basic friendliness for and understanding of the Negro and praised his loyalty to master and family during the Civil War.

On the other hand he was obsessed with the doctrine of white supremacy. He introduced it into all of the speeches and writings (1886-1889) collected under the title *The New South* and introduced by Mills Lane for the Beehive series. "Those who would put the negro race in supremacy would work against infallible decree, for the white race can never submit to its domination, because the white race is the superior race." God, he continues, had separated the races and placed the white man above the black. "No race has risen, or will rise, above its ordained place. . . . I declare that the truth above all others to be worn unsullied and sacred in your hearts . . . is that the white race must dominate forever in the South." He feared the Negro vote (although he argued that it should not be suppressed by violence). He referred to it as that "vast mass of impulsive, ignorant and purchasable votes." It was these attitudes that led, just a few years after Grady's death, to lynch law and the disintegration of Georgian politics, although Grady himself was, in spite of his racism, a man of goodwill and strongly opposed to violence. In his insistence on looking to the future while not being ashamed of the past and in his progressive ideas on industrialization and cooperation with the economic powers of the North he was one of the most enlightened Georgians of his time.

Mills Lane's lavishly illustrated *Savannah Revisited: A Pictorial History* is a pleasant and attractive accompaniment to the scholarly research and historical volumes of the Beehive series. There are one hundred and sixty large pages of drawings, charts, and photographs showing the development of Savannah, beginning with "Bull Street in 1734, a clearing in the virgin forest of Savannah was a rude and crude military outpost" to beautifully photographed examples of domestic, public, and church architecture from 1820-1890. The monument of Pulaski in Monterey Square—the Polish Count so vividly described by William Bacon Stevens in his aforementioned history of Georgia—appears in at least half a dozen pictures.

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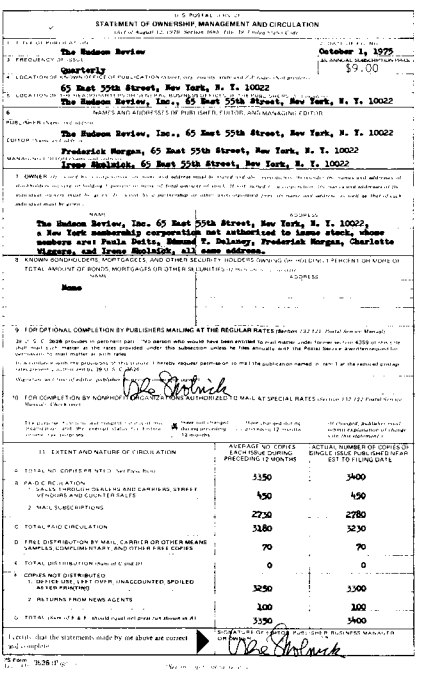

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